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My Danish Sweetheart.

THE ROMANCE OF A MONTH.

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MY DANISH SWEETHEART.

CHAPTER I.

A SULLEN DAY.

On the morning of October 21, in a year that one need not count very far back to arrive at, I was awakened from a light sleep, into which I had fallen after a somewhat restless night, by a sound as of thunder some little distance off, and on going to my bedroom window to take a view of the weather, I beheld so wild and forbidding a prospect of sea and sky that the like of it is not to be imagined.

The heavens were a dark, stooping, universal mass of vapor —swollen, moist, of a complexion rendered malignant beyond belief by a sort of greenish color that lay upon the face of it. It was tufted here and there into the true aspect of the electric tempest; in other parts, it was of a sulky, foggy thickness; and as it went down to the sea-line it wore, in numerous places, a plentiful, heavy, dark shading that caused the clouds upon which this darkness rested to look as though their heavy burden of thunder was weighing their overcharged breasts down to the very sip of the salt.

A small swell was rolling betwixt the two horns of cliff which framed the wide bight of bay that I was overlooking. The water was very dark and ugly with its reflection of the greenish, sallowish atmosphere that tinged its noiseless, sliding volumes. Yet, spite of the shrouding shadow of storm all about, the horizon lay a clear line, spanning the yawn of ocean and heaven betwixt the foreland points.

There was nothing to be seen seaward; the bay, too, was empty. I stood for a little while watching the cloud of foam made by the swell where it struck upon the low, black ledge of what we called in those parts Deadlow Rock, and upon the westernmost of the two fangs of reef some little distance away from the Deadlow Rock, and named by the sailors hereabouts the Twins; I say I stood watching this small play of white water, and hearkening for another rumble of thunder;

but all remained hushed—not a breath of air—no glance of dumb lightning.

On my way to the parlor I looked in upon my mother, now an old lady, whose growing infirmities obliged her to keep her bed till the day was advanced. I kissed and greeted her.

"It seems a very dark, melancholy morning, Hugh," says she.

"Ay, indeed," I answered. "I never remember the like of such a sky as is hanging over the water. Did you hear the thunder just now, mother?"

She answered no; but then, to be sure, she was a little deaf.

"I hope, Hugh," said she, with a wistful shake of her head, and smoothing her snow-white hair with a hand that slightly trembled, "that it may not end in a life-boat errand. I had a wretched dream last night. I saw you enter the boat and sail into the bay. The sun was high and all was bright and clear; but on a sudden the weather grew black—dark as it now is. The wind swept the water which leaped high and boiled. You and the men strove hard to regain the land, and then gave up in despair, and you put right before the wind, and the boat sped like an arrow into the gloom and haze; and just before she vanished a figure rose by your side where you sat steering, and gazed at me thus"—she placed her forefinger upon her lip in the posture of one commanding silence. "It was your father, Hugh: his face was full of entreaty and despair." She sighed deeply. "How clearly does one sometimes see in dreams!" she added. "Never was your father's face in his dear life more distinct to my eyes than in this vision."

"A Friday night's dream told on a Saturday!" said I, laughing: "no chance of its coming true, though. No fear of the 'Janet'"—for that was the name of our life-boat—"blowing out to sea. Besides, the bay is empty. There can be no call. And supposing one should come and this weather should burst into a hurricane, I'd rather be afloat in the 'Janet' than in the biggest ship out of London or Liverpool docks;" and so saying I left her, never giving her dream or her manner another thought.

After I had breakfasted I walked down to the esplanade to view the "Janet" as she lay snug in her house. I was her cockswain, and how it happened that I filled that post I will here explain.

My father, who had been a captain in the merchant service, had saved money, and invested his little fortune in a couple of ships, in one of which, fifteen years before the date of this story, he had embarked to take a run in her from the river Thames

to Swansea, where she was to fill up with a cargo for a South American port. She was a brand-new ship, and he wished to judge of her sea-going qualities. When she had rounded the North Foreland the weather thickened; it came on to blow a gale of wind; she took the ground somewhere near the North Sand Head, and of twenty-three people aboard of her fifteen perished, my father being among those who were drowned.

His brother—my uncle, George Tregarthen—was a well-to-do merchant in the city of London, and in memory of my father's death, which grieved him to the soul, and which, with the loss of the others, had come about through delay in sending help from the land—for they fired guns and burned flares, and the adjacent light-ship signaled with rockets that a vessel was ashore; but all to no purpose, for when the rescue was attempted the ship was breaking up, and most of her people were corpses; as I have said—my uncle, by way of memoralizing his brother's death, at his own cost presented the little town in which my father had lived with a life-boat, which he called the "Janet," after my mother. I was then too young to take a part in any services she rendered; but by the time I had reached the age of twenty I was as expert as the smartest boatman on our part of the coast, and, as I claimed a sort of captaincy of the life-boat by virtue of her as a family gift, I replaced the man who had been her cockswain, and for the last two years had taken her helm during the six times she had been called upon; and not a little proud was I to be able to boast that, under my charge, the "Janet" in those two years had rescued twenty-three men, five women, and two children from certain death.

No man could love his dog or his horse—indeed, I may say, no man could love his sweetheart—with more fondness than I loved my boat. She was a living thing, to my fancy, even when she was high and dry. She seemed to appeal to me out of a vitality that might well have passed for human, to judge of the moods it kindled in me. I would sit and view her, and think of her afloat, figure some dreadful scene of shipwreck, some furious surface of seething yeast, with a ship in the heart of it, coming and going amid storms of spray; and then I would picture the boat crushing the savage surge with her shoulder, as she stormed through the tremendous play of ocean on her way to the doomed craft whose shrouds were thick with men; until such emotions were raised in me that I have known myself almost unconsciously to make an eager step to the craft, and pat her side, and talk to her as though she were sentient and could understand my caress and whispers.

My mother was at first strongly opposed to my risking my life

in the "Janet." She said I was not a sailor, least of all was I of the kind who manned these boats, and for some time she would not hear of me going as cockswain in her, except in fine weather or when there was little risk. But when, as cockswain, I had brought home my first little load of precious human freight—five Spaniards with the captain's wife and a little baby, wrapped in a shawl, against her heart—my mother's reluctance yielded to her pride and gratitude. She found something beautiful, noble, I had almost said divine, in this life-saving—in this plucking of poor human souls from the horrible jaws of death—in the hope and joy, too, raised in the heart of the shipwrecked by the sight of the boat, or in the supporting animation which came from the knowledge that the boat would arrive in time, and which enabled men to bear up, when, perhaps, had there been no promise of a boat coming to them, they must have drooped and surrendered their spirits to God.

Well, as I have said, I went down to the esplanade, where the boat-house was, to take a look at the boat, which was, indeed, my regular daily custom, one I could find plenty of leisure for, since I was without occupation, owing to a serious illness that had balked my efforts six years before, and that had left me too old for another chance in the same way—and without will, either, for the matter of that; for my mother's income was abundant for us both, and, when it should please God to take her, what was hers would be mine, and there was more than enough for my plain wants.

Before entering the house I came to a stand to light a pipe and cast a look around. The air was so motionless that the flame of the match I struck burned without a stir. I took notice of a slight increase in the weight of the swell which came brimming into the bay out of the wide, dark field of the Atlantic Ocean: for that was the sea our town faced, looking due west from out of the shadow of the Cornwall heights, at the base of which it stood—a small, solid heap of granite-colored buildings dominated by the tall spire of the church of St. Saviour, the gilt cross atop of which gleamed this morning against the scowl of the sky as though the beam of the risen sun rested upon it.

The dark line of the broad esplanade went winding round with the trend of the shore to the distance of about a mile. The dingy atmosphere gave it a coloring of chocolate, and the space of white sand which stretched to the wash of the water had the glance of ivory from the contrast. The surf was small, but now that I was near I could catch a note in the noise it

made as it foamed in a cloudy line upon the sand, which made me think of the voice of a distant tempest, as though each running fold brought with it, from far past the sea-line, some ever-dying echo of the hurricane's rage there. But a man had need to live long at the sea-side to catch these small accents of storm in the fall and pouring of the unvexed breaker.

A number of white-breasted sea-gulls, with black-edged wings, were flying close in-shore this side of Deadlow Rock and Twins: their posture was in the main one of hovering and peering, and there was a sort of subdued expectancy rather than restlessness in their motions; but they frequently uttered sharp cries, and were certainly not a-fishing, for they never stooped. Within a stone's-throw of the life-boat house was a coast-guard's hut, a little place for keeping a lookout from, marked by a flag-post; and the preventive man, with a telescope under his arm, stood in the door-way, talking to an aged boatman named Isaac Jordan. The land past that flag-staff went in a rise, and soared into a very noble height of dark cliff, the extremity of which we called Hurricane Point. It looked a precipitous, deadly, inhospitable terrace of rocks in the dismal light of that leaden morning. The foreland rose out of the bed of foam which was kept boiling at the iron base by the steadfast hurl of the Atlantic swell; yet Hurricane Point made a fine shelter of our bay when the wind came out from the north, and I have seen the sea there bursting and soaring into the air in volumes of steam, and the water a mile and a half out running wide and wild and white with the whipping of the gale, when, within, a wherry might have strained to her painter without shipping a cupful of water.

There was an old timber pier going into the sea from off a projection of land, upon the northernmost point of which the life-boat house stood; this pier had a curl like the crook of a sailor's rheumatic forefinger; but it was not possible to find any sort of harbor in the rude, black, gleaming embrace of its pitched and weedy piles, save in smooth and quiet weather. It was an old pier, and had withstood the wash and shocks of fifty years of the Atlantic billow—enough to justify a man in staring at it, since ours was a wild and stormy seaboard, where everything had to be as strong as though we were at sea, and had the mighty ocean itself to fight. At times a collier would come sailing round Bishopnose Point, a tall, reddish-hued bluff past Deadlow Rock, and slide within the curve of the pier, and discharge her freight. Here, too, in the seasons, might be seen a cluster of fishing-boats, mainly the sharp-ended luggers of Penzance; but this morning, as I have al-

ready said, all was vacant from the horizon to the white sweep of sand—vacant, and, in a manner, motionless too, with the quality of stagnation that came into the picture out of the sullen, breathless, gloom-laden atmosphere, nothing stirring, as it seemed, save the heave of the swell, and a few active figures of 'longshoremen down by the pier hauling up their boats high and dry upon the sand, with an eye to what was coming in the weather.

I entered the life-boat house and killed ten minutes or so in surveying the fabric inside and out, and seeing that everything was in readiness should a call come. A ship's barometer—a good instrument—hung against the wall or bulkhead of the wooden edifice. The mercury was low, with a depression in the surface of the metal itself that was like emphasizing the drop.

Our manner of launching the "Janet" was by means of a strong timber slipway that went into a pretty sharp declivity from the forefoot of the boat to some fathoms past low-water mark. There could be no better way of getting her water-borne. The sand was flat; there was little to be done with a heavy boat on such a platform, let us have laid what greased woods or rollers we choose under her keel. But from the elevation of her house she fled, when liberated, like a gull into the rage of the water, topping the tallest comber, and giving herself noble way in the teeth of the deadest of in-shore hurricanes.

As I stood at the head of this slipway, looking along it to where it buried itself in the dark and sickly green of the flowing heave of the sea, old Isaac Jordan came slowly away from the coast-guardsman and saluted me in a voice that trembled under the burden of eighty-five years. Such another quaint old figure as this might have been hunted for in vain the whole coast round. His eyes, deep-seated in his head, seemed to have been formed of agate, so stained and clouded were they by time, by weather, and, no doubt, by drink. His tall hat was bronzed with wear and exposure, the skin of his face lay like a cobweb upon his lineaments, and when he smiled he exhibited a single tobacco-stained tooth, which made one think of Deadlow Rock. Isaac did not belong to these parts, yet he had lived in the place for above half a century, having been brought ashore from a wreck in which he had been found, the only occupant, lying senseless upon the deck. When he had recovered he was without memory, and for five years could not have told his father's name nor the place he hailed from. When at last recollection returned to him he was satisfied to

remain in the corner of this kingdom on which the ocean, so to speak, had cast him, and for fifty years he had never gone half a mile distant from the town unless seaward, and then never beyond the bay, where he would fish for his own feeding, or ply as a carrier between the shore and such ships as brought up.

"Good-marning, Mr. Tregarthen," said he in the accent of Whitstable, which was his native place; "reckon there'll be some work afore ye if so be as this here muckiness ain't a-going to blow away," and here he turned up his marbled eyes to the sky in a sort of blind, groping way.

"I never remember the like of such a morning like this, Isaac," said I, going down to him that I might not oblige him to strain his poor old trembling voice.

"Lard love ye!" he exclaimed; "scores and scores, Mr. Tregarthen. I recollect of just such another marning as this in forty-four; ay, an' an uglier marning yet in thirty-three. That were the day when the 'Kingfisher' went down and drownded all hands, saving the dawg."

"What's going to happen, d'ye think, Isaac?"

"A gale o' wind, master, but not yet. He's a-bracing of himself up, and it'll be all day, I allow, afore he's ready;" and once again he cast up his agate-like eyes to the sky. "What's the day o' the month, sir?" he added, with a little briskening up.

"October the twenty-first, isn't it?"

"Why, Gor bless me! yes, an' so it be!" he exclaimed, with a face whose expression was rendered spasmodic by an assumption of joyful thought. "The hanniversary of Trafalgar, as sure as my name's Isaac! On this day Lord Nelson was killed. Gor bless me! to think of it! I see him now," he continued, turning his eyes blindly upon my face. "There's nothen I forget about him. There's his sleeve lying beautifully pinned agin his breast, and the fin of his decapitated harm a-working full of excitement within; there's his cocked hat drawed down ower the green shade as lies like a poor man's plaister upon his forehead; there's his one eye a-looking through and through a man as though it were a brad-awl, and t'other eye, said to be sightless, a-imitating of the seeing one till ye couldn't ha' told which was which for health. There was spunk in the werry wounds of that gent. He carried his losses as if they were gains. What a man! There ain't public-houses enough in this country," said he, "to drink to the memory of such a gentleman's health in. There ain't.

That's my complaint, master. Not public-houses enough, I says, seeing what he did for this here Britain."

Though nobody in Tintrenale (as I choose to call the town) in the least degree believed that old Isaac had ever met Lord Nelson, despite his swearing that he was five years old at the time and that he could recollect his mother hoisting him up in her arms above the heads of the crowd to view the great admiral—I say, though no man believed this old fellow, yet we all listened to his assurances, as though very willing to credit what he said. In truth, it pleased us to believe that there was a man in our little community who with his own eyes had beheld the famous sailor, and we let the thing rest upon our minds as a sort of honorable tradition which we would not very willingly have disturbed. However, more went to this talk of Nelson in old Isaac than met his ear; it was, indeed, his way of asking for a drink, and, as he had little or nothing to live upon save what he could collect out of charity, I slipped a couple of shillings into his hand, for which he continued to God bless me till his voice failed him.

I held my gaze fixed upon the sky for some time to gather, if possible, the direction in which the great swollen canopy of cloud was moving, that I might know from what quarter to expect the wind when it should arise; but the sullen greenish heaps of shadow hung over the land and sea as motionless as they were dumb. Not the least loose wing of scud was there to be seen moving. It was a wonderfully breathless heaven of tempestuous gloom, with the sea at its confines betwixt the two points of land looking to lift to it in its central part as though swelled, owing to the illusion of the line of livid shade there, and to a depression on either side caused by a smoky commingling of the atmosphere with the spaces of water.

While I stood surveying the murky scene, that was gradually growing more dim with an insensible thickening of the air, several drops of rain fell, each as large as a half crown.

"Stand by now for a flash o' lightning," old Isaac cried, in his trembling voice; "wance them clouds is ripped up, all the water they hold'll tumble down and make room for the wind!"

But there was no lightning. The rain ceased. The stillness seemed to deepen to my hearing, with a fancy to my consciousness of a closer drawing together of the shadows overhead.

"'T'ain't so werry warm, neither," said old Isaac; "and yet here be as true a tropic show as old Jamaikey herself could prowide."

Every sound was startlingly distinct—the calls and cries of the fellows near the pier as they ran their boats up; the grit of the keels on the hard sand, like the noise of skates traveling on ice; the low, organ-like hum of the larger surf, beating upon the coast past Bishopnose Point; the rattle of vehicles in the stony streets behind me; the striking of a church-bell; the hoarse bawling of a hawker crying fish; it was like the hush one reads of as happening before an earthquake, and I own to an emotion of awe and even of alarm as I stood listening and looking.

I hung about the boat-house for hard upon two hours, expecting every minute to see the white line of the wind sweeping across the sea into the bay; for by this time I had persuaded myself that what motion there was above was out of the westward; but in all that time the glass-smooth, dark-green surface of the swell was never once tarnished by the smallest breathing of air. Only one particular that was absent before I now took notice of: I mean a strange, faint, salt smell, as of sea-weed in corruption, a somewhat sickly odor of ooze. I had never tasted the like of it upon the atmosphere here; what it signified I could not imagine. One of my boat's crew, who had paused to exchange a few words with me about the weather, called it the smell of the storm, and said that it arose from a distant disturbance working through the sea through leagues and leagues, as the dews of the body are discharged through the pores of the skin.

The same man had walked up to the heights near to Hurricane Point to take a view of the ocean, and now told me there was nothing in sight, save just a gleam of sail away down in the north-west, almost swallowed up in the gloom. He was without a glass, and could tell me no more than that it was the canvas of a ship.

"Well," said I, "nothing, if it be not steam, is going to show itself in this amazing calm." And, saying this, I turned about and walked leisurely home.

We dined at one o'clock. We were but two, mother and son; and the little picture of that parlor arises before me as I write, bringing moisture to my eyes as I recall the dear, good, tender heart nevermore to be beheld by me in this world—as I see the white hair, the kindly aged face, the wistful looks fastened upon me, and hear the little sighs that would softly break from her when she turned her head to send a glance through the window at the dark, malignant junction of sea and sky ruling the open between the points, and at the frequent flashing of the foam on those evil rocks grinning upon the heav-

ing waters away down to the southward. I could perceive that the memory of her dream lay upon her in a sort of shadow. Several times she directed her eyes from my face to the portrait of my father upon the wall opposite her. Yet she did not again refer to the dream. She talked of the ugly appearance of the sky, and asked what the men down upon the pier thought of it.

"They are agreed that it is going to end in a gale of wind," I answered.

"There is no ship in the bay," said she, raising a pair of gold-rimmed glasses to her eyes and peering through the window.

"No," said I; "and the sea is bare, saving a single sail somewhere down in the north-west."

She smiled, as though to a piece of good news. There could be no summons for the life-boat, she knew, if the bay and the ocean beyond remained empty.

After dinner, while I sat smoking my pipe close against the fire—for the leaden color in the air somehow made the atmosphere feel cold, though we were too far west for any touch of autumnal rawness just yet—and while my mother sat opposite me, poring through her glasses upon a local sheet that told the news of the district for the week past—the rector of Tintrenale, the Rev. John Trembath, happening to pass our window, which was low-seated, looked in, and, spying the the outline of my figure against the fire, tapped upon the glass, and I called to him to enter.

"Well, Mr. Cockswain," says he, "how is the weather going to end, pray? I hear there's a ship making for this bay."

"I hope not," says my mother, quietly.

"How far distant is she?" said I.

"Why," he answered, "I met old Roscorla just now. He was fresh from Bishopnose way, and told me that there was a square-rigged vessel coming along before a light air of wind out of the west, and apparently heading straight for this bight."

"She may shift her helm," said I, who, though no sailor, had yet some acquaintance with the terms of the sea; "there'll be no shelter for her here if it comes on to blow from the west."

"And that's where it is coming from," said Mr. Trembath.

"Oh, for a little break of the sky, for one brief gleam of sunshine!" cried my mother, suddenly, half starting from her chair as if to go to the window. "There is something in a day of this kind that depresses my heart as though sorrow

were coming. Do you believe in dreams, Mr. Trembath?" and now I saw she was going to talk of her dream.

"No," said he, bluntly; "it is enough to believe in what is proper for our spiritual health. A dream never yet saved a soul."

"Do you think so?" said I. "Yet a man might get a hint in a vision, and in that way be preserved from doing a wrong."

"What was your dream?" said Mr. Trembath, rounding upon my mother; "for a dream you have had, and I see the recollection of it working in your face as you look at me."

She repeated her dream to him.

"Tut! tut!" cried he, "a little attack of indigestion. A small glass of your excellent sherry brandy would have corrected all these crudities of your slumbering imagination."

Well, after an idle chat of ten minutes, which yet gave the worthy gentleman time enough to drink to us in a glass of that cherry brandy which he had recommended to my mother, he went away, and shortly afterward I walked down to the pier to catch a sight of the ship. In all these hours there had been no change whatever in the aspect of the weather. The sky of dark cloud wore the same swollen, moist, and scowling appearance it had carried since the early morn, but the tufted thunder-colored heaps of vapor had been smoothed out or absorbed by the gathering thickness which made the atmosphere so dark that, though it was scarcely three o'clock in the afternoon, you would have supposed the sun had set. The swell had increased; it was now rolling into the bay with weight and volume, and there was a small roaring noise in the surf already, and a deeper note yet in the sound of it where it boiled seaward past the points. A light air was blowing, but as yet the water was merely brushed by it into wrinkles which put a new dye into the color of the ocean—a kind of inky green—I do not know how to convey it. Every glance of foam upon the Twins or Deadlow Rock was like a flash of white fire, so somber was the surface upon which it played.

Hurricane Point shut out the view of the sea in the northwest, even from the pier-head, and the ship was not to be seen. There was a group of watermen on the lookout, one or two of them members of the life-boat crew, and among these fellows was old Isaac Jordan, who, as I might easily guess, had drunk out my two shillings. He wore a yellow sou'-wester over his long iron-gray hair, and he lurched from one man to another. with his arm extended and his fingers clawing the air, arguing

in the shrill voice of old age, thickened by the drams he had swallowed.

"I tell 'ee there's going to be a airthquake," he was crying as I approached. "I recollects the likes of this weather in eighteen hunnerd an' eighteen, and there was a quake at midnight that caused the folks at Faversham to git out of their beds and run into the street; twor felt at Whitstable, and turned the beer o' th' place sour. Stand by for a airthquake, I says. Here's Mr. Tregarthen, a scholard. The likes of me, as is old enough to be granddad to the oldest of ye all, may raison with a scholard and be satisfied to be put right if so be as he's wrong, when such scowbankers as you a'n't to be condescended to outside the giving of the truth to ye. And so I says. Mr. Tregarthen—"

But I quietly put him aside.

"No more money for you, Isaac," said I, "so far as my purse is concerned, until you turn teetotaler. It is enough to make one blush for one's species to see so old a man—"

"Mr. Tregarthen," he interrupted, "you're a gin'man, ain't ye? What have I 'ad. Is a drop o' milk and water going to make ye blush for a man?"

Some of the fellows laughed.

"And how often," he continued, "is the hanniversary of the battle o' Trafalgar a-going to come round in a year? Trenty-voorst of October to-day is, and I see him now, Mr. Tregarthen, as I see you—his right fin a-going, his horders upon his breast—"

"Here, come you along with me, Isaac!" exclaimed one of the men, and, seizing the old fellow by the arm, he bore him off.

CHAPTER II.

A NIGHT OF STORM.

I OVERHUNG the rail of the pier, looking down upon the heads of the breakers as they dissolved in white water amid the black and slimy supporters of the structure, and sending a glance from time to time toward the northern headland out of which, I gathered from the men about me, the ship would presently draw, though no one could certainly say as yet that she was bound for our bay, spite of her heading direct for the land. A half hour passed, and then she showed: her bowsprit and jibbooms came forking out past the chocolate-colored height of cliff, and the suddenness of this presentment of white wings of jibs and staysails caused the canvas to look ghastly for the

moment against the dark and drooping smoke-colored sky that overhung the sea where she was—as ghastly, I say, as the gleam of froth is when seen at midnight, or a glance of moonshine dropping spear-like through a rift and making a little pool of light in the midst of a black ocean.

I watched her with curiosity. She was something less than three miles distant, and she drew out very stately under a full breast of sail, rolling her three spires—the two foremost of which were clothed to the trucks—with the majesty of a war-ship. We might now make sure that she was bound for the bay and meant to bring up. The air was still a very light wind, which made a continuous wonder of the muteness of the storm-shadow that was overhead; and the vessel, which we might now see, was a bark of six hundred tons or thereabouts, floated into the bay very slowly. Her canvas swung as she rolled, and made a hurry of light of her, and one saw the glint of the sails broaden in the brows of the swell which chased and underran her, so reflective was the water, spite of the small wrinkling of it by the weak draught.

"A furriner," said a man near me.

"Ay," said I, examining her through a small but powerful pocket telescope; "that green caboose doesn't belong to an Englishman. She's hoisting her color! Now I have it—a Dane!"

"What does she want to come here for?" exclaimed another of the little knot of men who had gathered about me. "Something wrong, I allow."

"Master drunk, per'aps," said a third.

"He'll be making a lee zhore of our ugly bit of coast, if it comes on to blow from the west'ard, and if not from there, then where else it's coming from who's going to guess?" exclaimed a gruff old fellow peering at the vessel under a shaggy, contracted brow.

"Her captain may have a trick of the weather above our comprehension," said I. "If the gale's to come out of the north he'll do well where he lets go his anchor; but if it's to be the other way about—well, I suppose some of our chaps will advise him. May be he has been tempted by the look of the bay; or he may have a sick or a dead man to land."

"Perhaps he has a mind to vind us a job to-night, zur," said one of my life-boat's men.

We continued watching. Presently she began to shorten sail, and the leisurely manner in which the canvas was first clewed up and then rolled up was assurance enough to a nautical eye that she was not overmanned. I could distinguish the

figure of a short, squarely framed man, apparently giving orders from the top of a long house aft, and I could make out the figure of another man, seemingly young, flitting to and fro with a manner of idle restlessness, though at intervals he would pause and sweep the town and foreshore with his telescope.

About this time five men launched a swift, powerful boat of a whaling pattern off the sand on to which it had been dragged that morning, far beyond high-water mark. They ran the little fabric over a line of well-greased planks or skids, and sprung into her as her bow met the first roll of water, and in a breath their oars were out and they were sweeping the boat toward the bark, making the spray spit from the stem to the herculean sweep of the blades. She was a boat that was mainly used for these errands—for putting help aboard ships which wanted it—for taking pilots off and bringing them ashore, and the like. So slow was the motion of the bark that she was still floating into the bay with her anchors at the catheads, and a few heads of men along the yards furling the lighter canvas, when the boat dashed alongside of her. When the stranger was about a mile and a half distant from the point of the pier which I watched her from, she let go her topsail halyards—she carried single sails—and a few minutes later her anchor fell, and she swung slowly, with her head to the swell and the light wind.

Scarcely was she straining to the scope of cable that had been paid out when the boat which had gone to her left her side. The men rowed leisurely; one could tell by the rise and fall of the oars that their errand had proved a disappointment, that there was nothing to be earned, nothing to be done, neither help nor counsel wanted. I walked down to that part of the sands where she would come ashore, but had to wait until her crew had walked her up out of the water before I could get any news. Our town was so dull, our habits of thought so primitive as to be almost child-like, the bay for long spells at a time so barren of all interests that the arrival of a vessel, if it were not a smack or a collier, excited the same sort of curiosity among us as a new-comer raises in a little village. A ship bringing up in the bay was something to look at, something to speculate upon; and then, again, there was always the expectation among the longshoremen of earning a few pounds out of her.

I called to one of the crew of the boat after she had been secured high and dry, and asked him the name of the vessel.

"The 'Anine,'" says he.

"What's wrong with her?" said I.

"Nothing but fear of the weather, I allow," said he; "she's from Cuxhaven, bound to Party Alleggy, or some such hole away down in the Brazils."

"Porto Alegre, is it?" said I.

"Ay," he answered, "that zounds nearer to the name that vur given to us. She's got a general cargo aboard. The master's laid up in the cabin; the chief mate broke un's leg off Texel, and they zent him into Partsmouth aboard of a zmack. The shap in charge calls himself Damm. I onderstood he'z carpenter acting as zecond mate. But who's to follow such a lingo as he talks?"

"He's brought up here with the master's sanction, I suppose?"

"Can't tell you that," he answered, "for I don't know. 'Pears to me as if this here traverse was Mr. Damm's own working out. He's got a cross-eye, and I don't rightly like his looks. He pointed aloft and zhook his head, and made us understand that he was here for zhelter. Jimmy," meaning one of the boat's crew, "pointed to the Twins, and Mr. Damm he grins and says, 'Yaw, yaw, dot's right!'"

"But if he's bound to the Brazils," I said, "how does it happen that he is on this side the Land's End? Porto Alegre isn't in Wales."

Here another of the boat's crew who had joined us, said, "I understood from a man who spoke a bit of English, that they was bound round to Swansea, but what to take in, atop of a general cargo, I can't say."

The sailors aboard the vessel were now slowly rolling the canvas about the yards. She was a wall-sided vessel, with a white figure-head and a square stern, and she pitched so heavily upon the swell sweeping to her bows that one could not but wonder how it would be with her when it came on to blow in earnest, with such a sea as the Atlantic in wrath threw into this rock-framed bight of coast. She rolled as regularly as she courtesied, and gave us a view of a band of new metal sheathing that rose with a dull rusty gleam out of the water, as though to some swift vanishing touch of stormy sunlight. The white lines of her furled canvas, with the delicate interlacery of shrouds and running-gear, the fine fibers of her slender mastheads with a red spot of dog-vane at the mizzen-mast—the whole body of the vessel, in a word, stood out with an exquisite clearness that made the heaving fabric resemble a choicely wrought toy upon the dark tempestuous green which

went rising and falling past her, and against the low and menacing frown of the sky beyond her.

A deeper shadow seemed to have entered the atmosphere since she let go her anchor. Away down upon her port quarter the foam was leaping upon the black Twins and the larger Rock beyond, and the round of the bay was sharply marked by the surf twisting in a wool-white curve from one point to another, but gathering a brighter whiteness as it stretched toward those extremities of the land which breasted the deeper waters and the larger swell.

The clock of St. Saviour's Church chimed five—tea-time; and as I turned to make my way home two bells were struck aboard the bark, and the light inshore wind brought in the distant tones upon the ear with a fairy daintiness of faint music that corresponded to perfection with the toy-like appearance of the vessel. One of the crew of the boat accompanied me a short distance on his way to his own humble cottage in Swim Lane.

"If that Dutchman," said he—and by "Dutchman" he meant Dane, for this word covers all the Scandinavian nations in Jack's language—"if that Dutchman, Mr. Tregarthen, knows what's good for him, he'll up anchor and 'ratch' out afore it's too late."

"Did you see the captain?"

"No, sir. He's in his cabin, badly laid up."

"I thought I made out two men on top of the deck-house who seemed in command—one the captain, and the other the mate, as I supposed."

"No, sir; the capt'n's below. One of them two men you saw was the carpenter, Damm; t'other was a boy—a passenger he looked like, though dressed as a sailor man. I didn't hear him give any orders, though his eyes seemed everywhere, and he looked to know exactly what was going forward. A likelier-looking lad I never see. Capt'n's son, I dare say."

"Well," said I, sending a glance above and around, "spite of drunken old Isaac and his prediction of 'airthquakes,' as he calls them, it's as likely as not, to my mind, that all this gloom will end as it began—in quietude."

The man, one of the most intelligent of our 'longshoremen, shook his head.

"The barometer don't tell lies, sir," said he; "the drop's been too slow and regular to signify nothing. I've known a gale o' wind to bust after taking two days to look at the ocean with his breath sucked in, as he do now. This here long quietude's the worst part, and—smother me! Mr. Tregarthen,"

said he, halting and turning his face seaward, "if the draught that was just now blowing ain't gone!"

It was as he had said. The light breathing of air had died out, and the swell was rolling in, burnished as liquid glass.

This day-long extraordinary pause in the most menacing aspect of weather that I had ever heard of—and never in my time had I seen the like of it—seemed to communicate its own quality of breathless suspense to every living object my eye rested upon. The very dogs seemed to move with a cowed manner, as though fresh from a whipping. There was no alacrity; little movement, indeed, anywhere visible. Men hung about in small groups and conversed quietly, as though some trouble that had affected the whole community was upon them. The air trembled with the noise of the breaking surf, and there was a note in its voice, sounding as it did out of the unnatural dark hush upon sea and land, that constrained the attention to it as to something new and even alarming. A tradesman, with his apron on and without a hat, would come to his shop door and look about him uneasily, and perhaps have a word with a customer as he entered before going round to the counter and serving him. The gulls flew close inshore and screamed harshly. Here and there, framed in a darkling pane of window, you would see an old face peering at the weather and pale in the shadow.

I found my mother a good deal troubled by the appearance of the ship. She asked, with a pettishness I had seldom witnessed in her, "What does she want? Why does she come here? Do they court destruction?"

I told her all I had learned about the vessel.

"There was no occasion for them to come here," she said. "Your dear father would have told you that the more distant a ship is upon the ocean in violent weather the safer she is; and here now come the foolish Danes to nestle among rocks and to sneer at the advice our people give them, with the sky looking more threatening than ever I can remember it. Who could have patience with such folk?" she cried, pouring out the tea with an air of distraction and an agitated hand. "If there were no such sailors as they at sea I am sure there would be no need for life-boats, and brave fellows would not have to risk their lives, and perhaps leave their wives and little children to starve, to assist people whose stupidity renders them almost unfit to be rescued."

"Why, mother," cried I, "this is not how you are accustomed to talk about such things."

"I am depressed," she answered—"my spirits have taken

their color from the day. A most melancholy heavy day indeed! Hark, my dear! Is not that the sound of the wind?"

She looked eagerly, straining her hearing.

"Yes," said I, "it is the wind come at last, mother," catching, at the instant of her speaking, the hollow groaning, in the chimney, of a sudden gust of wind flying over the house-top. "From which quarter does it blow? I must find out!"

I ran to the house door, and as I opened it the wind blew with the sweep of a sudden squall right out of the darkness upon the ocean. It filled the house, and such was the weight of it that I drove the door to with difficulty. It was but a quarter before six, but the shadow of the night had entered to deepen the shadow of the storm, and it was already as dark as midnight. I went to the window and parted the curtains to take a view of the bay, but the panes of glass were made a sort of mirror of by the black atmosphere without, and when I looked they gave me back my own countenance, darkly gleaming, and the reflection of objects in the room—the lamp with its green shade upon the table, the sparkle of the silver and the china of the tea-things, and my mother's figure beyond. Yet, by peering, I managed to distinguish the speck of yellow luster that denoted the riding light of the Danish bark—the lantern, I mean, that is hung upon a ship's forestay when she lies at anchor; otherwise it was like looking down into a well. Nothing, save the flash of the near foam tumbling upon the beach right abreast of the house was to be seen.

"Which way does the wind come, Hugh?" called my mother.

"From the westward, with a touch of south in it, too, right dead inshore. It is as I have been expecting all day."

That night of tempest began in gusts and squalls, with lulls between which were not a little deceptive, since they made one think that the wind was gone for good, though while the belief was growing there would come another shrieking outrush and a low roaring in the chimney, and such a shrill and doleful whistling in the casements which there was no art in carpentry to hermetically seal against the winds of that wild, rugged western coast, as might have made one imagine the air to be filled with the ghosts of departed boatswains plying their silver pipes as they sped onward in the race of black air.

Some while before seven o'clock it had settled into a gale, that was slowly but obstinately gathering in power, as I might know by the gradually raised notes in the humming it made and by the ever-deepening thunder of warring billows rushing into breakers and bursting upon sand and crag. It came along in a furious play of wet, too, at times; the rain lashed the

windows like small shot, and twice there was a brilliant flash of lightning that seemed spiral and crimsoned; but, if thunder followed, it was lost in the uproar of the wind. It was a night to "stand by," as a sailor would say; at any moment a summons might come, and, while that weather held, I knew there must be no sleep for me. It would have been all the same, indeed, bark or no bark, for this was a night to make a very hell of the waters along our line of coast; there was not another life-boat station within twenty-five miles, and, even had the bay been empty, as I say, yet, as cockswain of the boat, I must have held myself ready for a call—ready for the notes of the bell summoning us to the rescue of a vessel that had been blown out of the sea into the bay—ready for a breathless appeal for help from some mounted messenger dispatched by the coast-guards miles distant to tell me that there was a ship stranded and that all hands must perish if we did not hurry to her.

My mother sat silent, with her face rendered austere by anxiety. It was about eight o'clock, when some one knocked hurriedly at the door. I ran out, being too eager to await the arrival of the servant; but, instead of some rough figure of a boatman which I had expected to see, in swept Mr. Trembath, who was carried by the violence of the wind several feet along the passage before he could bring himself up. I put my shoulder to the door, but believed I should have had to call for help to close it, so desperate was the resistance.

"What a night! What a night!" cried the clergyman. "What is the news? You will not tell me, Tregarthen, that the ship yonder is going to hold her own against this wind and the sea that is running?"

"Pray step in," said I. "You are plucky to show your face to it!"

"Oh, tut!" he cried; "it is not for a clergyman any more than for a seaman to be afraid of weather. I fear there'll be a call for you, Tregarthen—I thought I would look round—I have finished my sermon for to-morrow morning"—and thus talking in a disjointed way while he pulled off his top-coat, he entered the parlor.

After warming himself and exchanging a few sentences with my mother about the weather, he began to talk again about the bark.

"Hark to that, now!" he cried, as the wind struck the front of the house with a crash that had something of the weight of a great sea in the sound of it, while you heard it in a roar of thunder overhead, charged always with an echo of pouring

waters. "What chain cables wrought by mortal skill are going to hold a vessel in the eye of all this?"

"What business have they to come here?" cried my mother.

"I met young Beckerley just now," continued Mr. Trembath, "and he tells me that there's some talk among our men of there having been a mutiny aboard that Dane."

"Nothing was said to me about that," I rejoined.

"Beckerly was in the boat's crew that boarded her," he went on. "Probably he imagined a mutiny—misinterpreted a gloomy look among the Danes into an air of revolt. Anyway, nothing short of a mutiny should justify a master in anchoring in such a roadstead as this in the face of the ugliest sky I ever saw in my life."

"They told me the master was below, ill and helpless," said I.

He went to the window and parted the curtains to peer through, but the wet ran down the glass, and it was like straining the gaze against a wall of ebony.

"You see," he continued, coming back to his chair, "the vessel has those deadly rocks right under her stern, and even if her cables don't part it is impossible to suppose that she will not drag and be on them in the blackness, perhaps without her people guessing at her neighborhood until she touches—and then God help them!"

"I suppose Pentreath!" exclaimed my mother, naming the second cockswain of the life-boat, "is keeping a lookout?"

"We need not doubt it," I answered. "As to her dragging," said I, addressing Mr. Trembath, "the Danes are as good sailors as the English, and understand their business; and, mutiny or no mutiny, those fellows down there are not going to take whatever may come without a shrewd guess at it, and outcry enough when it happens. They'll know fast enough if their vessel is dragging; then a flare will follow, and out we shall have to go, of course."

"We!" said he, significantly, looking from me to my mother. "You'll not venture to-night, I hope, Tregarthen."

"If the call comes, most certainly I shall," said I, flushing up, but without venturing to send a glance at my mother. "I have appointed myself captain of my men, and is it for me, of all my boat's crew, to shirk my duty in an hour of extremity? Let such a thing happen, and I vow to Heaven I could not show my face in Tintrenale again."

Mr. Trembath seemed a little abashed.

"I respect and admire your theory of dutifulness," said he; "but you are not an old hand—you are no seasoned boatman

in the sense I have in my mind when I think of others of your crew. Listen to this wind! It blows a hurricane, Hugh," he exclaimed, gently; "you may have the heart of a lion; but have you the skill—the experience—" He halted, looking at my mother.

"If the call comes I will go," said I, feeling that he reasoned only for my mother's sake, and that in secret his sympathies were with me.

"If the call comes, Hugh must go," said my mother. "God will shield him. He looks down upon no nobler work done in this world, none that can better merit His blessing and His countenance."

Mr. Trembath bowed his head in a heartfelt gesture.

"Yet I hope no call will be made," she went on. "I am a mother"—her voice faltered, but she rallied, and said with courage and strength and dignity—"yes, I am Hugh's mother. I know what to expect from him, and that whatever his duty may be he will do it." Yet in saying this she pressed both her hands to her heart, as though the mere utterance of the words came near to breaking it.

I stepped to her side and kissed her. "But the call has not yet come, mother," said I. "The vessel's anchors may hold bravely, and then, again, the long dark warning of the day will have kept the coast clear of ships."

To this she made no reply, and I resumed my seat, gladdened to the very heart by her willingness that I should go if a summons came, albeit extorted from her love by perception of my duty; for had she been reluctant, had she refused her consent, indeed, it must have been all the same. I should go whether or not, but in that case with a heavy heart, with a feeling of rebellion against her wishes that would have taken a deal of spirit out of me, and mingled a sense of disobedience with what I knew to be my duty and good in the sight of God and man.

I saw that it comforted my mother to have Mr. Trembath with her, and when he offered to go I begged him to stop and sup with us, and he consented. It was not a time when conversation would flow very easily. The noise of the gale alone was subduing enough, and to this was to be added the restlessness of expectation, the conviction in my own heart that sooner or later the call must come; and every moment that I talked—putting on the cheerfulest face I could assume—I was waiting for it. I constantly went to the window to look out, guessing that if they burned a flare aboard the bark the torch-like flame of it would show through the weeping glass; and

shortly before supper was served—that is to say, within a few minutes of nine o'clock—I left the parlor, and going to a room at the extremity of the passage, where I kept my sea-going clothes, I pulled on a pair of stout fisherman's stockings, and over them the sea-boots I always wore when I went in the life-boat. I then brought away my monkey-jacket and oilskins, and sou'-wester, and hung them in the passage ready to snatch at; for a summons to man the boat always meant hurry—there was no time for hunting: indeed, if the call found the men in bed, their custom was to dress themselves as they ran.

Thus prepared, I returned to the parlor. Mr. Trembath ran his eye over me, but my mother apparently took no notice. A cheerful fire blazed in the grate. The table was hospitable with damask and crystal; the play of the flames set the shadows dancing upon the ceiling that lay in the gloom of the shade over the lamp. There was something in the figure of my old mother, with her white hair and black silk gown and antique gold chain about her neck, that wonderfully fitted that homely interior, warm with the hues of the coal-fire and cheerful with pictures and several curiosities of shield and spear, of stuffed bird and Chinese ivory ornament gathered together by my father in the course of many voyages.

Mr. Trembath looked a plump and rosy and comfortable man as he took his seat at the table, yet there was an expression of sympathetic anxiety upon his face, and frequently I would catch him quietly hearkening, and then he would turn involuntarily to the curtained window, so that it was easy to see in what direction his thoughts went.

"One had need to build strongly in this part of the country," he said, as we exchanged glances at the sound of a sudden driving roar of wind—a squall of wet of almost hurricane power—to which the immensely strong fabric of our house trembled as though a heavy battery of cannon were being dragged along the open road opposite, "for, upon my word, Hugh," said he—we were old friends, and he would as often as not give me my Christian name—"if the Dane hasn't begun to drag as yet, there should be good hope of her holding on throughout what may still be coming. Surely, for two hours now past her ground tackle must have been very heavily tested."

"My prayer is," said I, "that the wind may chop round and blow off shore. They'll have the sense to slip then, I hope, and make for the safety of wide waters, with an amidship helm."

"He is his father's son," said Mr. Trembath, smiling at my

mother. "An amidship helm! It is as a sailor would put it. You should have been a sailor, Tregarthen."

My mother gently shook her head, and then for some time we eat in silence, the three of us feigning to look as though we thought of anything else rather than of the storm that was raging without, and of the bark laboring to her cables in the black heart of it.

On a sudden, Mr. Trembath let fall his knife and fork.

"Hist!" he cried, half rising from his chair.

"The life-boat bell!" I shouted, catching a note or two of the summons that came swinging along with the wind.

"Oh, Hugh!" shrieked my mother, clasping her hands.

"God keep your dear heart up!" I cried.

I sprung to her side and kissed her, wrung the outstretched hands of Mr. Trembath, and in a minute was plunging into my peacoat and oilskins. The instant I was out of the house I could hear the fast—I may say the furious—tolling of the life-boat bell, and sending one glance at the bay, though I seemed almost blinded, and in a manner dazed by the sudden rage of the gale and its burden of spray and rain against my face, I could distinguish the wavering, flickering yellow light of a flare-up down away in that part of the waters where the Twins and the Deadlow Rock would be terribly close at hand. But I allowed myself no time to look beyond this hasty glance. Mr. Trembath helped me by trying to pull the house door to after me, for of my own strength I never could have done it, and then I took to my heels and drove as best I might headlong through the living wall of wind, scarcely able to fetch a breath, reeling to the terrific outflies, yet staggering on.

The gas-flames in the few lamps along the sea-front were wildly dancing, their glazed frames rattled furiously, and I remember noticing, even in that moment of excitement, that one of the lamp-posts which stood a few yards away from our house had been arched by the wind as though it were a curve of leaden pipe. The two or three shops which faced the sea had their shutters up to save the windows, and the blackness of the night seemed to be rather heightened than diminished by the dim and leaping glares of the street lights. But as I neared the life-boat house my vision was somewhat assisted by the whiteness of the foam boiling in thunder a long space out. It flung a dim, elusive, ghostly illumination of its own upon the air. I could see the outline of the boat-house against it, the shapes of men writhing, as it seemed, upon the slipway; the figure of the boat herself, which had already been eased by her own length out of the house; and I could even discern by

the aid of that wonderful light of froth, that most of or all her crew were already in her, and that they were stepping her mast, which the roof of the house would not suffer her to keep aloft when she was under shelter.

"Here's the cocks'n!" shouted a voice.

"All right, men!" I roared, and with that I rushed through the door of the house, and, in a bound or two, gained the interior of the boat and my station on the after-grating.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE LIFE-BOAT.

Now had come the moment when I should need the utmost exertion of nerve and coolness my nature was equal to. There was a large globular lamp alight in the little building—its luster vaguely touched the boat, and helped me to see what was going on and who were present. Nevertheless, I shouted:

"Are all hands aboard?"

"All hands!" came a hurricane response.

"All got your belts on?" I next cried.

"All!" was the answer—that is to say, all excepting myself, who, having worn a cork jacket once, vowed never again to embark thus encumbered.

"Are your sails hooked on ready for hoisting?" I shouted.

"All ready, sir."

"And your haul-off rope?"

"All ready, sir!"

"Now then, my lads—look out, all hands!"

There was a moment's pause: "Let her go!" I roared.

A man stood close under the stern, ready to pass his knife through the lashing which held the chain to the boat.

"Stand by!" he shouted. "All gone!"

I heard the clank of the chain as it fell, an instant after the boat was in motion—slowly at first, but in a few breaths she had gathered the full way that her own weight and the incline gave her, and rushed down the slipway, but almost noiselessly, so thickly greased was the timber structure, with some hands hoisting the foresail as she sped, and others, grim and motionless, facing seaward ready to grasp and drag upon the haul-rope the moment the craft should be water-borne amid the smothering surf.

The thunderous slatting of the sail as the yard mounted, flinging a noise of rending upon the ear as though the hurricane were whipping the cloths in rags, the furious roaring and

seething and crackling and hissing of the mountainous breakers toward which the boat was darting—the indescribable yelling of the gale sweeping past our ears as the fabric fled down the ways—the instant sight of the torn and mangled skies which seemed dimly revealed somehow by the snow-storms of froth coursing along the bay—all this combined into an impression which, thought it could not have taken longer than a second or two to produce it, dwells upon my mind with so much sharpness that the whole experience of my life might well have gone to the manufacture of it.

We touched the wash of the sea and burst through a cloud of foam; in the beat of a heart the boat was up to our knees in water; in another she was freeing herself and leaping to the height of the next boiling acclivity, with my eight men, rigid as iron statues in their manner of hauling and in their confrontment of the sea, dragging the craft through the surf and into deep water by the off-haul rope attached to an anchor some considerable distance ahead at the end of the slipway.

At the moment of the boat smiting the first of the breakers I grasped the tiller-ropes, and on the men letting go of the off-haul line I headed the craft away on the port tack, my intention being to "reach" down in the direction of Hurricane Point, so as to be able to fetch the bark on a second board.

One had hardly the wits to notice the scene at the first going off, so headlong was the tumble upon the beach, so clamorous the noise of the tempest, and so frightfully wild the leapings and launchings of the boat amid the heavily broken surface of froth. But now she had the weight of the gale in the close-reefed lug that had been shown to it, and this steadied her; and high as the sea ran, yet as the water deepened the surge grew regular, and I was able to settle down to my job of handling the boat, the worst being over, at least so far as our outward excursion went.

I glanced shoreward and observed the blaze of a port-fire, held out by a man near the boat-house to serve as a signal to the bark that help was going to her. The fire was blue, the blaze of it was brilliant, and it lighted up a wild area of the foreshore, throwing out the figures of the crowd who watched us, and the outline of the boat-house, and flinging a ghastly tint upon every tall upheaval of surf. The radiance lay in a sort of circle upon the ebony of the night, with what I have named showing in it, as though it was a picture cast by a magic-lantern upon a black curtain. You could see nothing of the lights of the town for it. On either hand of this lumi-

nous frame the houses went blending into the land, and each way all was sheer ink.

Shortly after this signal of port-fire they sent up a rocket from the bark. It was a crimson ball, and it broke like a flash of lightning under the ragged rush of the sky, and then out leaped afresh the flames of a flare, or, as you might call it, a bonfire from the deck of a vessel—a burning tar-barrel perhaps; and the light of it disclosed the vision of the ship plunging awfully, again and again veiled by storms of crystal which the fathom-high flames of the flare flashed into prisms.

One of our men roared out with an oath: "She'll have taken the Twins afore we get to her!" and another bellowed: "Why did they wait to drag a mile afore they signaled?" But no more was said just then.

Indeed, a man needed to exert the whole strength of his lungs to make himself heard. The edge of the wind seemed to clip the loudest as it left the lips, as you would sever a rope with a knife.

Our boat was small for a craft of her character, but a noble, brave, nimble fabric, as had been again and again proved; and every man of us, allowing that good usage was given her, had such confidence in the "Janet" that we would not have exchanged her for the largest, handsomest, and best-tested boat on the coast of the United Kingdom. You would have understood her merits had you been with us on this night. I was at the yoke-lines; Pentreath, my second in command, sat with his foot against the side, gripping the fore-sheet, ready to let go in an instant; the mizzen had been hoisted, and the rest of the men, crouching down upon the thwarts, sat staring ahead with iron countenances, with never so much as a stoop among them to the hardest wash of the surge that might sweep with a wild hissing shriek athwart their sea-helmets and half fill the boat as it came bursting in smoke over the weather bow, till, for the space of a wink or two, the black gale was as white as a snow-storm overhead.

As we "reached" out the sea grew weightier. Never before had I known a greater sea in that bay. The ridges seemed to stand up to twice the height of our masts; every peak boiled, and as we rose to the summit of it the boat was smothered in the foam of her own churning, and in the headlong, giddy, dazzling rush into which she soared, with the whole weight of the gale in her fragment of lug bowing her over and sending her, as you might have believed, gunwale under down the long, indigo slant of the underrunning billow.

We held on, all as mute as death in the boat. From time

to time as we rose to the head of a sea I would take a look in the direction of the bark, and catch a glimpse of the windy spark of her flare, or of the meteoric sailing of a rocket over her mastheads. There should have been a moon, but the planet was without power to strike the faintest illumination into the heaps and rags of vapor which were pouring up like smoke over the edge of the raging Atlantic horizon. The picture of the parlor I had just left would sometimes arise before me; I figured my mother peering out at the black and throbbing scene of bay; I imagined good Mr. Trembath at her side, uttering such words of comfort and of hope as occurred to him; but such fancies as these seemed to be beaten away by the breath of the hurricane as rapidly as they were formed. Should we be in time? If the vessel's cables parted she was doomed. Nay; if she should continue to drag another quarter of an hour, she would be on to the Twins, and go to pieces as a child's house of bricks falls to the touch of a hand!

"Ready about!" I roared.

The helm was put down, the fore-sheet eased off, and round came the boat nobly on the very pinnacle of a surge, pausing a moment as she was there poised, and then plunging into the hollow to rise again with her foresail full, and heading some points to windward of the vessel we were now steering for.

Through it we stormed, sea after sea bursting from the life-boat's bow in pallid clouds which the wind sent whirling in shrieks—so articulate was the sound of the slinging spray—into the blackness landward. Here and there a tiny spark of lamp flickering in the thick of the gloom told us the situation of Tintrenale, but there was nothing more to be seen that way; the land and the sky above it met in a deep, impenetrable dye, toward which, to leeward of us, the tall seas went flashing in long yearning coils, throbbing into mere pallidness when a cable's length distant.

They had kindled another flare aboard the bark, or else had plied the old one with fresh fuel; she was visible by the light of the flames, the white of her furled canvas coming and going to the fluctuating fires; and I marked, with a heart that sunk in me, the dreadful manner of her laboring. She was pitching bows under, and rolling too, and by the shining of the signal-fire upon her deck offered a most wonderful sight, rendered terrible also by a view that we could now get of a crowd of men hanging in a lump in her starboard fore-rigging.

The second cockswain flashed a port-fire that they might know the life-boat was at hand, and we went plunging and sweeping down to a point some little distance ahead of the bark,

the crowd of us irradiated by the stream of emerald-green flame.

"All ready with the anchor, lads?" I shouted.

"Already, sir!" was the answer.

"Down foresail!" and as I gave this order I put the helm down and brought the boat-head to wind about thirty fathoms ahead of the ship.

"Let go the anchor!"

"Unstep the foremast!" bawled the second cockswain, and, while this was doing, he and another swiftly lifted the mizzen-mast out of its bearings and laid it along.

"Veer away cable handsomely!" I shouted; and pitching and foaming, now dropping into a hollow that seemed fifty feet deep, now appearing to scale a surge that lifted the boat's bow almost dead on end over her stern—all in a fashion to make the brain of the stoutest and most experienced among us reel again—we dropped alongside.

In what followed there was so much confusion, so much uproar, such distraction of shouts in foreign and unintelligible accents, such a terrible washing of seas, such bewilderment born of the darkness, of the complicated demands upon the attention through need of keeping the boat clear of the huge chopping bows of the bark, through bawling to the men in the rigging and receiving answers which we could not understand, that this passage of my singular adventure could scarcely be less vague to me in memory than, instead of having been an actor in it, I had read it in a book.

There were six or seven men, as well as I could make out, clustered in the fore-rigging. I believed I could see others in the mizzen-shrouds. This being my notion, my consuming anxiety was to drop the boat down on the quarter as swiftly as possible, for it was not only that the Twins were within a cable's range astern, with the fury of the foam there making a kind of shining upon the water that might have passed for moonlight; such was the volume and height of the sea roaring betwixt the laboring ship and our boat that at every toss of the little fabric, at every ponderous lean down of the great, groaning black hull towering over us, we stood to be staved.

The fellows in the fore-rigging seemed to be stupefied. We all of us yelled, "Jump, jump! Watch as she rises, and jump, for God's sake!" meanwhile keeping a turn of the cable as to hold the boat abreast of them. It seemed an eternity before they understood, and yet a minute had not passed since we dropped down, when a cry broke from them, and first one jumped and then another, and then the rest of them sprung,

and there they were lying in a huddle in the bottom of the boat, one or two of them groaning dreadfully, as though from broken limbs, or worse injuries, still, all of them motionless as they lay when they jumped, like folk nearly dead of terror and cold and pain.

"Veer out now, my lads! veer out!" I cried: "handsomely, that we may get smartly under the mizzen-shrouds."

"There's nobody there, sir!" roared one of my men.

No! I looked and found that it had been an illusion of my sight, due to the flame of the flare that was burning fiercely on the main-deck.

"Are you all here?" I cried, addressing the dusky huddle of men at the bottom of the boat.

Something was said, but the gale deafened me, and I could catch no meaning, no syllables, indeed, in the answer.

"They'll all be here, sir," shouted one of my crew: "the port davits are empty, and some'll have left in the boat."

A great sea swung us up at that instant flush with the level of the bulwark rails, with a heel of the bark that disclosed her decks bare to the bright fires of the signal.

"They must be all here!" I cried; "but look well. Is there one among you who can catch any signs of a living man on board?"

They waited for the next upheaval of the sea, and then rose a shout: "They're all here, sir, you'll find."

"Heave ahead then, my lads!" by which I meant that they should haul upon the cable to drag the boat clear of the dreadful, crushing, shearing chop of the overhanging bows of the bark.

At that instant a head showed over the rail a little abaft the fore-shrouds, and the clear, piercing voice of a boy cried, with as good an English accent as I myself have: "My father is ill and helpless in the cabin. Do not leave us!"

"No, no, we'll not leave you," I instantly shouted in return, sending my voice fair to the lad from the height of a sea that pretty well brought his and my head on a level. "How many are there of you?"

"Two," was the answer.

I had to wait for the boat to slide up to the summit of the next surge ere I could call out again. The black yawns betwixt us and the bark might have passed for valleys looked at from a hill-side, so horribly hollow and deep were they; they were pale, and yet dusky too, with sheets of foam; a soul-confounding noise of thunderous washing and seething rose up from them. When we were in one of these hollows the great

mass of the dark fabric of the bark seemed to tower fifty feet above us, and we lay becalmed, hanging, while you might have counted five, in absolute stagnation, with the yell of the wind sweeping over our heads as though we were in the heart of a pit.

"Can not your father help himself at all?" I bawled to the boy.

"He can not stir, he must be lifted!" he answered in a shriek, for his high, clear, piercing cry thus sounded.

"By Heaven, then, lads," I bawled to my men, "there's no time to be lost! We must bundle the poor fellow over somehow, and help the lad. Nothing will have been done if we leave them behind us. Watch your chance and follow me, three of you!"

At the instant of saying this I made a spring from off the height of the gratings on which I stood, and got into the fore-chains, the boat then being on the level of that platform; and as actively as a cat, for few young fellows had nimbler limbs, I scrambled over the bulwark on to the deck, just in time to escape a huge fold of rushing water that foamed sheer through the chains with a spite and weight that must instantly have settled my business for me.

I was in the act of running along the deck to where the lad stood—that is to say, a little forward of the gangway, not doubting that the others of my crew whom I had called upon were following with as much alertness as I had exhibited, when I felt a shock as of a thump pass through the bark.

"She has struck!" thought I.

But hardly was I sensible of this tremor through the vessel when there arose a wild and dreadful cry from alongside. Heavenly God! how am I to describe that shocking noise of human distress? I fled to the rail and looked over; it was all boiling water under me, with just a sight of the black line of the gunwale or of the keel of the life-boat; but there was such a raging of foam, such a thickness of seething yeast smoking into the hurricane as though some volcanic eruption had happened right under the bark, filling the air with steam, that there was nothing whatever to be seen save just that dark glance of keel or gunwale, as I have said, which, however, vanished as I looked into the depth of the hissing, spumy smother. I knew by this that the life-boat must have been staved and filled by a sudden fling of her against the massive sides of the bark; for she was a self-righting craft, and, though she might have thrown every soul in her out as she rolled over, yet she would have rose buoyant again, emptying herself as she leaped to the surge,

and there she would have been alongside, without a living creature in her, if you will, but a good boat, and riding stoutly to her cable. But she had been stove, and now she was gone!

The blazing tar-barrel on the main-deck enabled me to see my way to rush aft. I cried to the lad as I sped: "The boat is staved; all hands of her are overboard and drowning! Heave ropes' ends over the side! fling life-buoys!" and thus shouting, scarcely knowing, indeed, what I called out, so confounded was I, so shocked, so horrified, so heart-broken, I may say, by the suddenness and the fearfulness of this disaster, I reached the quarter of the bark and overhung it; but I could see nothing. The cloudy boiling rose and fell, and with every mighty drop of the great square counter of the bark the sea swept in a roar from either hand of her with a cataractal fury that would rush whatever was afloat in it dozens of fathoms distant at every *scend*. Here and there *now* I believe I could distinguish some small black object, but the nearer pallid waters dimmed into a blackness at a little distance, and, if those dark points which I observed were the heads of swimmers, then such was the headlong race of the surge they were swept into the throbbing dusk ere I could make sure of them.

I stood as one paralyzed from head to foot. My inability to be of the least service to my poor comrades and the unhappy Danes caused me to feel as though the very heart in me had ceased to beat. The young fellow came to my side.

"What is to be done?" he cried.

"Nothing!" I answered in a passion of grief. "What can be done? God grant that many of them will reach the shore! The hurl of the sea is landward, and their life-belts will float them. But your people are doomed."

"And so are we!" he exclaimed, shrilly, yet without perceptible terror, with nothing worse than wild excitement in his accents: "there are rocks directly under our stern. Are you a sailor?"

"No!"

"Oh, du gode Gud! what is to be done?" cried the lad.

I cast my eyes despairingly around. The tar-barrel was still burning bravely upon the deck, defying the ceaseless sweeping of spray from over the bows; the windy, unearthly light tinctured the ship with its sickly sallow hue to the height of her lower yards, and the whole ghastly body of her was to be seen as she rolled and plunged under a sky that was the blacker for the light of the distress-flare, and upon a sea whose vast spreads of creaming brows would again and again come charging along to the very height of the bulwark rail,

In the midst of this pause on my part, and while every instinct of self-preservation in me was blindly flinging itself, so to speak, against the black and horrible situation that imprisoned me, and while I was hopelessly endeavoring to consider what was to be done to save the young fellow alongside of me from destruction—for, as to his father, it was impossible to extend my sympathies at such a moment to one whom I had not seen, who did not appeal to me, as it were, in form and voice for succor—I say, in the midst of this pause of hopeless deliberation, the roar of the hurricane ceased on a sudden. Nothing more, I was sure, was signified by this than a lull, to be followed by some fierce chop round, or by the continuance of the westerly tempest with a bitterer spite in the renewed rush of it. The lull may have lasted ten or fifteen seconds. In that time I do not know that there was a breath of air to be felt outside the violent eddyings and draughts occasioned by the sickening motions of the bark. I looked up at the sky, and spied the leanest phantom of a star that glimmered for the space of a single swing of a pendulum, and then vanished behind a rushing roll of vapor of a midnight hue, winging with incredible velocity from the land.

So insupportable was the movement of the deck that I was forced to support myself by a belaying pin or I must have been thrown. My companion clung to a similar pin close beside me. The thunder of running and colliding waters rose into that magical hush of tempest; I could hear the booming of the surf as far as Hurricane Point, and the caldron-like noises of the waters round about the rocks astern of us.

"Has the storm ceased?" cried my companion. "Oh, beloved father, we may be spared yet!" he added, extending his disengaged hand toward the deck-house as he apostrophized the helpless man who lay there.

Amazed as I was by this instant cessation of the gale, I could yet find mind enough to be struck by my companion's manner, by his words, and now, I may say, by his voice also. I was about to address him; but as my lips parted there was a vivid flash of lightning that threw out the whole scene of bay, cliff, foreshore, and town, with the line of the horizon seaward, in a dazzle of violet; a crash of thunder followed, but, before its ear-splitting reverberation had ceased, the echoes of it were drowned in the bellowing of the gale coming directly off the land.

What is there in words to express the fury of this outfly? It met the heave of the landward-running seas, and swept them into smoke, and the air grew as white and thick with spume as

though a heavy snow-storm were blowing horizontally along. It took the bark and swung her; her laboring was so prodigious as she was thrust by this fresh hurricane broadside round to the surges, that I imagined every second she would founder under my feet. I felt a shock; my companion cried, "One of the cables has parted!" A moment later I felt the same indescribable tremble running through the planks on which we stood.

"Is that the other cable gone, do you think?" I shouted.

"There is a lead-line over the side," he cried; "it will tell us if we are adrift."

I followed him to near the mizzen-rigging; neither of us durst let go with one hand until we had a grip of something else with the other; it was now not only the weight of the wind that would have laid us prone and pinned us to the deck; a pyramidal sea had sprung up as though by enchantment, and each apex as it soared about the bows and sides was blown inboards in very avalanches of water, which with each violent roll of the vessel poured in a solid body to the rail, one side or the other, again and again, to the height of our waist.

My companion extended his hand over the bulwarks, and cried out: "Here is the lead-line. It stretches toward the bows. Oh, sir, we are adrift! we are blowing out to sea!"

I put my hand over and grasped the line, and instantly knew by the angle of it that the lad was right. By no other means would he have been able to get at the truth. The weight of lead, by resting on the bottom, immediately told if the bark was dragging. All around was white water; the blackness of the night drooped to the very spit of the brine; not a light was to be perceived, not the vaguest outline of cliff; and the whole scene of darkness was the more bewildering for the throb of the near yeast upon the eyesight.

"Is your binnacle light burning?" I cried.

The lad answered: "Yes."

"Then," I shouted, "we must find out the quarter the gale has shifted into, and get her stern on to it, and clear Hurricane Point, if Almighty God will permit. There may be safety in the open; there is none here."

With the utmost labor and distress we made our way aft. The flare had been extinguished by the heavy falls of water, and it was worse than walking blindfolded. The binnacle light was burning—this was, indeed, to be expected. The bark was plunging directly head to wind, and a glance at the card enabled me to know that the gale was blowing almost due east,

having shifted, as these cyclonic ragings often do, right into the quarter opposite whence it had come.

"We must endeavor to get her before it," I cried; "but I am no sailor. There may come another shift, and we ought to clear the land while the hurricane holds as it does. What is to be done?"

"Will she pay off if the helm is put hard over?" he answered. "Let us try it!"

He seized the spokes on one side; I put my shoulder to the wheel on the other, and thus we jammed and secured the helm into the posture called by sailors "hard a-starboard." She fell off, indeed—into the trough, and there she lay, amid such a diabolical play of water, such lashings of seas on both sides, as it is not in mortal pen to portray!

Had we been in the open ocean, a better attitude than the bark herself had taken up we could not have wished for. She was, indeed, hove-to, as the sea expression is, giving something of her bow to the wind, and was in that posture which the ship-master will put his vessel into in such a tempest as was now blowing. But, unhappily, the land was on either hand of us, and, though our drift might be straight out to sea, I could not be sure that it was so. The tide would be making to the west and north; the coils and pyramids and leapings of surge had also a sort of yearning and leaning toward north-west as if in sympathy with the tide; the deadly terrace of Hurricane Point lay that way; and so the leaving of the bark in the trough of the sea might come, indeed, to cost us our lives, which had only just been spared by the shift in the storm of wind!

"She does not answer the helm," I cried to my young companion.

"Her head will pay off," he answered, "if we can manage to hoist a fragment of sail forward. It *must* be done, sir. Will you help me?"

"God knows I will do anything!" I cried. "Show me what is to be done. We must save our lives if we can. There may be a chance out on the ocean for us."

Without another word he went forward, and I followed him. We had to pause often to preserve ourselves from being floated off our feet. The flood, which washed white betwixt the rails, lifted the rigging off the pins, and sent the ropes snaking about the decks, and our movements were as much hampered as though we fought our way through a jungle. The foam all about us outside and inboards put a wild, cold glimmer into the air, which enabled us to distinguish outlines. In fact, at moments the whole shape of the bark, from her bul-

warks to some distance up her masts, would show like a sketch in ink upon white paper as she leaned off the slant of the sea and painted her figure upon the hill of froth thundering away from her on the lee-side.

My companion paused for a moment or two under the shelter of the caboose or galley to tell me what he meant to do. We then crawled on to the forecastle, and he bade me hold on by a rope which he put into my hand, and await his return. I watched him creep into the "eyes" of the vessel and get upon the bowsprit, but after that I lost sight of him, for the seas smoked so fiercely all about the ship's head—to every plunge of her bows there rose so shrouding a thickness of foam—that the air was a fog of crystals where the lad was, and had he gone overboard he could not have vanished more utterly from my sight. Indeed, I could not tell whether he was gone or not, and a feeling of horror possessed me when I thought of being left alone in the vessel with a sick and useless man lying somewhere aft, and with the rage and darkness of the dreadful storm around me, the chance of striking upon Hurricane Point, and no better hope at the best than what was to be got out of thinking of the midnight breast of the storming Atlantic.

After a few minutes there was the noise of the rattling of canvas resembling a volley of small shot fired off the bows. The figure of the lad came from the bowsprit out of a burst of spray that soared in steam into the wind.

"Only a fragment must be hoisted!" he exclaimed, with his mouth at my ear. "Pull with me!"

I put my weight upon the rope, and together we rose a few feet of the sail upon the stay—it was the foretopmast staysail, as I afterward discovered.

"Enough!" cried my companion, in his clear, penetrating voice; "if it will but hold till the vessel pays off, all will be well. We dare not ask for more."

He secured the rope we had dragged upon to a pin, and I followed him aft, finding leisure even in that time of distress and horror to wonder at the coolness, the intrepidity of soul that was expressed in this clear, unfaltering speech, in the keen judgment and instant resolution of a lad whose age, as I might gather from his voice, could scarcely exceed fifteen or sixteen years. Between us we seized the wheel afresh, one on either side of it, and waited. But we were not to be kept long in suspense. Indeed, even before we had grasped the helm the bark was paying off. The rag of canvas held nobly, and to the impulse of it the big bows of the vessel rounded away from the gale, and in a few minutes she was dead before it, pitch-

ing furiously, with the sea snapping and foaming to her taffrail and quarters.

But the thickness of her yards, with the canvas rolled up on them, the thickness of the masts, too, the spread of the tops, the complicated gear of shroud, backstay, and running-rigging, all offered resistance enough to the dark and living gale that was bellowing right over the stern to put something of the speed of an arrow into the keel of the fabric. Through it she madly raced, with pallid clouds blowing about her bows, and white peaks hissing along her sides, and a wake of snow under her counter heaving to half the height of the mizzen-mast with the hurl of the seas, and a ceaseless blowing of froth over our heads as the lad and I stood together grasping the wheel, steering the vessel into the darkness of the great Atlantic Ocean, with our eyes upon the compass-card, whose illuminated disk showed the course on which we were being flashed forward by the storm to be a trifle south of west.

CHAPTER IV.

HELGA NIELSEN.

For full twenty minutes the lad and I clung to the helm without exchanging a word. The speed of the driven vessel rendered her motion comparatively easy, after the intolerable lurching and rolling and plunging of her as she lay at anchor or in the trough. She was swept onward with such velocity that I had little or no fear of her taking in the seas over her stern, and she steered well, with but little wildness in the swerving of her bows, as was to be seen by the comparative regularity of the oscillation of the compass-card.

This running before the tempest, of course, diminished the volume and power of it, so far, I mean, as our own sensations were concerned; but the sight of the sea, as much of it at least as was visible, coupled with the thunder of the wind up aloft in the sky, and the prodigious crying and shrieking and shrilling of it in the rigging, was warrant enough that were we to heave the bark to, we should find the hurricane harder now than it had been at any other time since it first came on to blow. Yet our racing before it, as I have said, seemed somewhat to lull it, and we could converse without having to cry out, though for twenty minutes we stood mute as statues waiting and watching.

At last my companion said to me: "Have we passed that point which you spoke of, do you think?"

"Oh, yes," I answered. "It would not be above two miles distant from the point where we broke adrift. Our speed can not have been less than eight or nine knots. I should say Hurricane Point is a full mile away, down on the quarter there."

"I fear that we shall find the sea," said he, "grow terribly heavy as we advance."

"Yes," said I, "but what is to be done? There is nothing for it but to advance. Suppose such another shift of wind as has just happened—what then? We should have a line of deadly shore right under our lee. No, we must hold on as we are."

"There are but two of us!" cried he; "my father can not count. What are we to do? We can not work this big ship."

"The weather may break," said I; "it is surely too fierce to last. What can we hope for but to be rescued or assisted by some passing vessel? Is this ship stanch?"

"Yes; she is a strong ship," he replied. "She is about six years old. My father is her owner. I wish I could go to him," he added; "he will be dying to learn what has happened and what is being done, and it is past the time for his medicine, and he will be wanting his supper!"

I tried to catch a view of him as he spoke these words, but the haze of the binnacle lamp did not reach to his face, and it was as black as the face of the sky itself out of that sheen. What he had said had a girlish note in it that I could not reconcile with his dress, with his seafaring alertness, with his spirited behavior, his nimble crawling out upon the bowsprit, and his perception of what was to be done under conditions which might well have clouded the wits of the oldest and most audacious sailor.

"Pray go and see your father," said I. "I believe I can keep this helm amidship without help." And, indeed, if I could not have steered the bark alone, I do not know that such assistance as he could offer would have suffered me to control her. He seemed but a slender lad—so far, at least, as I had been able to judge from the view I got when the flare was burning—very quick, but without such strength as I should have looked for in a young seaman, as I could tell whenever the wheel had to be put up or down.

He let go the spokes, and stood apart for a minute or two, as though to judge whether I could manage without him; then said he: "I will return quickly," and with that took a step and vanished in the blackness forward of the binnacle-stand.

My mind dwelt for a moment upon him, upon the clearness

and purity of his voice, upon a something in his speech which I could not define, and which puzzled me; upon his words, which were as good English as one could hope to hear at home, albeit there was a certain sharpness and incisiveness—perhaps I might say a little of harshness—in his accentuation that might suggest him a foreigner to an English ear, though, as I then supposed, it was more likely than not this quality arose from the excitement and dismay and distress which worked in him as in me.

But he speedily ceased to engage my thoughts. What could I dwell upon but the situation in which I found myself—the spectacle of the black outline of the bark painting herself upon the volumes of white water she heaved up around her as she rushed forward, pitching bows under, her rigging echoing with unearthly cries, as if the dark waving mass of spar and gear aloft were crowded with tormented souls wailing and howling and shrieking dismally? I recalled my mother's dream; I believed I was acting in some dreadful nightmare of my own slumbers; all had happened so suddenly—so much of emotion, of wild excitement, of agitation, and, I may say, horror, had been packed into the slender space of time between the capsizal of the life-boat and this rushing out of the bay that, now I had a little leisure to bend my mind to a contemplation of the reality, I could not believe in it as an actual thing. I was dazed; my hearing was stunned by the ceaseless roar of wind and seas. The "Janet" stove and sunk! All my lion-hearted men drowned perhaps! The poor Danes, for whom they had forfeited their lives, long ago corpses! Would not this break my mother's heart? Would there be a survivor to tell her that when I was last seen I was aboard the bark? Once again I figured the little parlor I had quitted but a few hours since —I pictured my mother sitting by the fire, waiting and listening —the long night, the bitter anguish of suspense! It was lucky for me that the obligation of having to watch and steer the vessel served as a constant intrusion upon my mind at this time, for could I have been able to sit down and surrender myself wholly to my mood, God best knows how it must have gone with me.

The lad was about ten minutes absent. I found him alongside the wheel without having witnessed his approach. He came out of the darkness as a spirit might shape itself, and I did not know that he was near me until he spoke.

"My father says that our safety lies in heading into the open sea, to obtain what you call a wide offing," said he.

"What does he advise?" I asked.

"'We must continue to run,' he says," answered the lad,

meaning by run that we should keep the bark before the wind. "'When the coast is far astern we must endeavor to heave to.' So he counsels. I told him we are but two. He answered, 'It may be done.'"

"I wish he were able to leave his cabin and take charge," said I. "What is his complaint?"

"He was seized shortly after leaving Cuxhaven with rheumatism in the knees," he answered; "he can not stand, can not indeed stir either leg."

"Why did he not get himself conveyed ashore for treatment?"

"He hoped to get better. We were to call at Swansea before proceeding to Porto Alegre, and, if he had found himself still ill when he arrived there, it was his intention to procure another captain for the 'Anine,' and remain at Swansea with me until he was able to return home."

"Who had charge of the bark when she was brought up in the bay?" I inquired, finding a sort of relief in asking these questions, and, indeed, in having somebody to converse with, for even my ten minutes of loneliness at the helm of that pitching and foaming vessel had depressed me to the very core of my soul.

"The carpenter, who acted as second mate."

"Yes, I recollect; some of our boatmen brought the news. Your chief mate broke his leg and was sent ashore. But did your father consent to the 'Anine' dropping anchor in so perilous a bay as ours—perilous, I mean, considering the weather at the time?"

"He was at the mercy of the man Damm—the carpenter, I mean," he answered. "The crew had refused to keep the sea; they said a tempest was coming, and that shelter must be sought before the wind came, and the carpenter steered the bark for the first haven he fell in with, which happened to be your bay. Our crew were not good men; they were grumbling much, as your English word is, from the hour of our leaving Cuxhaven."

"But surely," said I, "the poor fellows who sprung out of the fore-rigging could not have formed the whole of the crew of a ship of this burden."

"No," he answered; "the carpenter and five men got away in one of the boats when they found that the bark was dragging her anchors. They lowered one boat, which filled and was knocked to pieces, and the wreck of it, I dare say, is still swinging at the tackles. They lowered the other boat, and went away in her."

"Did they reach the shore?"

"I do not know," said he.

"They must have been a bad lot," said I; "those who escaped in the boat and those who hung in the shrouds, to leave your helpless father to his fate."

"Oh! a bad lot, a wicked lot!" he cried. "They were not Danes," he added. "Danish sailors would not have acted as those men did."

"Are you a Dane?" I asked.

"My father is," he answered. "I am as much English as Danish. My mother was an English woman."

"I should have believed you wholly English," said I. "Are you a sailor?"

He answered no. I was about to speak, when he exclaimed: "I am a girl!"

Secretly for some time I had supposed this, and yet I was hardly less astonished had I been without previous suspicion.

"A girl!" I cried, sending my sight groping over her figure; but to no purpose. She was absolutely indistinguishable, saving her arms, which were dimly touched by the haze of the binnacle light as they lay upon the spokes of the wheel.

"It is my whim to dress as a boy on board ship!" she exclaimed, with no stammer of embarrassment that I could catch in her clear delivery, that penetrated to my ear without loss of a syllable through the heavy storming of the gale, flashing with the fury of a whirlwind off the brows of the seas which rushed at us, as the bark's counter soared into the whole weight and eye of the tempest.

So far had we conversed; but at this moment a great surge took the bark and swung her up in so long, so dizzy, and sickening an upheaval, followed by so wild a fall into the frothing hollow at its base, that speech was silenced in me, and I could think of nothing else but the mountainous billows now running. Indeed, as my companion had predicted, the further we drew out from the land the heavier we found the sea. The play of the ocean, indeed, out here was rendered fierce beyond words by the dual character of the tempest; for the seas which had been set racing out of the west had not yet been conquered by the violence of the new gale and by the hurl of the liquid hills out of the east, and the bark was now laboring in the same sort of pyramidal sea as had run in the bay, saving that here the whole power of the great Atlantic was in each billow, and the fight between the contending waters was as a combat of mighty giants.

The decks were full of water, at frequent intervals the brow of the sea rushing past us, swift as was our own speed upon its careering back, would arch over the rail and tumble aboard in a heavy fall of water, and the smoke of it would rise from the planks as though the bark were on fire, and make the blackness forward of the main-mast hoary. I sought in vain for the least break in the dark ceiling of the sky. Will the vessel be able to keep afloat? I was now all the time asking myself. Is it possible for any structure put together by human hands to outlive such a night of fury as this? As I have said, I was no sailor, yet my 'longshore training gave me very readily to know that the best, if not the only, chance for our lives was to get the bark hove-to, and leave her to breast the seas and live the weather out as she could with her helm lashed, and, perhaps, some bit of tarpaulin in the weather-rigging, to keep her head up. But this that was to be easily wished was inexpressibly perilous to attempt or achieve, for, in bringing the vessel to, it was as likely as not we should founder out of hand. A single sea might be enough to do our business; and, failing that, there was the almost certain prospect of the decks being swept, of every erection from the taffrail to the bows being carried away, ourselves included, of a score of leaks being started by a single blow, and, even if the girl and I managed to hold on, of the bark foundering under our feet.

Thus we rushed onward, very literally indeed scudding under bare poles, as it is called, and for a long while we had neither of us a word to exchange, so present was calamity, so near was death, so dreadful was the thunderous sounds of the night, so engrossing our business of keeping the flying fabric dead before the seas.

I pulled out my watch and held it hastily to the binnacle lamp, and found the hour exactly one. The girl asked me the time. This was the first word that had passed between us for a long while. I replied, and she said in a voice that indicated extraordinary spirit, but that, nevertheless, sounded languishingly after her earlier utterance: "Now that it is past midnight, the gale may break; surely such fierce weather can not last for many hours."

"I wish you would go," said I, "and get some refreshment for yourself, and lie down for awhile. I believe I can manage single-handed to keep the vessel before it."

"If I lie down, it would not be to sleep," she answered "but if you think I can be spared from the wheel for a few minutes, I will obtain some refreshment for us both, and I should also like to see how my father does."

I answered that if the helm was to prove too heavy for me, her help might hardly save me from being obliged to let go.

"Do not believe this," she exclaimed, "because you now know that I am a girl!"

"I have had no heart for wonderment as yet," said I; "otherwise my astonishment and admiration would reassure you, if you suppose I doubt your strength and capacity now that I know you to be a girl. A little refreshment will help us both;" and I was going to advise her to seize the opportunity to attire herself in dry clothes, for I was in oilskins, whereas, so far as I was able to gather, her dress was a pea-jacket and a cloth cap, and I knew that again and again she had been soaked to the skin, and that the wind pouring on her would be chilling her to her very heart. But even amid such a time as this I was sensible of a diffidence in naming what was in my mind, and held my peace.

She left the wheel, and I stood steering the bark single-handed, with my eyes fixed upon the illuminated compass-card, while I noticed that the course the vessel was taking, which always held her dead before the gale, was now above a point, nay, perhaps two points, to the southward of west; whence it was clear the hurricane was veering northwardly.

Whether it was because this small shift in the wind still found the colliding seas traveling east and west, or that some heavy surge sweeping its volume along the starboard bow caused the bark to "yaw" widely, as it is termed, and so brought a great weight of billow against the rudder; be the cause what it will—while my eye was rooted upon the card, the stern of the vessel was, on a sudden, run up with the velocity of a balloon from whose car all the ballast has been thrown, the spokes were wrenched from my hand as they revolved like the driving-wheel of a locomotive in full career, and I was sent spinning against the bulwark, from which I dropped upon my knees and so rolled over, stunned.

For all I could tell I might have lain five minutes or five hours without my senses. I believe I was brought to by the washing over of me of the water that lay in that lee-part of the deck into which I had been flung. I sat erect, but for a long while was unable to collect my mind, so bewildered were my brains by the fall and so confounded besides by the uproar round and about. I then made out the figure, as I took it, of the girl, standing at the wheel, and got on to my legs, and after feeling over myself, so to speak, to make sure that all my bones were sound, I staggered, or rather clawed my way up to the wheel; for the bark seemed now to me to be upon her

beam ends, and rolling with dreadful wildness, and there were times when the foaming waters rushed inboards over the rail which she submerged to leeward.

The girl cried out when she spied me. I had to draw close indeed to be seen; it was as black down where I was thrown as the inside of the vessel's hold. She cried out, I say, uttering some Danish exclamation, and then exclaimed:

"Oh! I feared you were lost; I feared that you had been thrown overboard; I ought not to have left you alone at the wheel. Tell me if you are hurt?"

"No; I am uninjured," I replied. "But what has become of the ship? I am only just recovered from my swoon."

"Oh!" she cried, "she has taken up the very situation you wished for. She has hove herself to. She came broadside to the sea after you were flung from the wheel. We are mercifully watched over. We dared not of ourselves have brought her to the wind."

All my senses were now active in me once more, and I could judge for myself. It was as the girl had said. The bark had fallen into the trough, had taken up a position for herself, and was shouldering the heavy western surge with her bow, coming to and falling off in rhythmic sweeps. Clouds of froth repeatedly broke over her forecastle, but she seemed while I then watched her to rise buoyant to each black curl of billow as it took her amidships.

"Will you help me to lash the helm?" cried the girl. "It is all that the 'Anine' will need, I am sure. She will be able to fight the storm alone if we can secure the wheel."

Between us, we drove the helm "hard a-lee," to use the sea term—for which, indeed, it is impossible to find an equivalent, though I trust to be as sparing in this language as the obligation of explanation will permit—and then, by means of ropes wound round the spokes, so bound the wheel as to cripple all play in it.

"Will she lie up to the wind, do you think," said I, "without some square of canvas abaft her to keep her head to it?"

"I have been watching her. I believe she will do very well," the girl answered. "I feared that that little head of sail we hoisted in the bay would blow her bows round, and, by this not happening, I suppose that sail is in rags. One would not have heard it split in such a thunder of wind as this."

"Have you seen your father?"

"Yes. I was talking to him when you were thrown from

the wheel. I knew what had happened by the behavior of the vessel. I ran out, and feared you were lost."

"What does he counsel?"

"Oh! it is still his wish that we should go on putting plenty of sea betwixt us and the land. But do you notice that the gale has gone somewhat into the north? He will be glad to hear it, now that we are no longer scudding. Our drift should put us well clear of the Land's End, and, indeed, I dare say now we are being thrust away at several miles an hour from the coast. He is very anxious to know if the 'Anine' has taken in water, and wishes me to sound the well. I fear I shall not be able to do this alone."

"Why should you?" cried I. "You shall do nothing alone! I can not credit that you are a girl! Such spirit—such courage—such knowledge of a calling the very last in the wide world that women are likely to understand! Pray let me ask your name?"

"Helga Nielsen," she answered. "My father is Peter Nielsen—Captain Peter Nielsen," she repeated. "And your name?"

"Hugh Tregarthen," said I.

"It is sad that you should be here," said she, "brought away from your home, suffering all this hardship and peril! You came to save our lives. God will bless you, sir. I pray that the good God may protect and restore you to those you love."

Spite of the roar of the wind, and the ceaseless crashing and seething sound of the smiting and colliding seas, I could catch the falter of emotion in her voice as she pronounced these words, but then, as you will suppose, we were close together, standing shoulder to shoulder against the binnacle, while we exchanged these sentences.

"There is refreshment in the cabin," said she, after a pause of a moment or two. "You need support. This has been a severe night of work for you, sir, from the hour of your putting off to us in the life-boat."

I found myself smiling at the motherly tenderness conveyed in the tone of her voice. I longed to have a clear view of her, for it was still like talking in a pitch-dark room; the binnacle lamp needed trimming; its light was feeble, and the sky lay horribly black over the ocean, that was raging, ghastly with pallid glances of sheets of foam, under it.

"Let us first sound the well, if possible," said I; "for our lives' sake we ought to find out what is happening below."

By this time we had watched and waited long enough to satisfy ourselves that the bark would do as well as we dared hope with her helm lashed; and it also happened very fortunately that her yards were in the right trim for the posture in which she lay, having been pointed to the wind—the fore-yards on one tack, the main-yards on the other—when the gale came on to blow in the bay, and the braces had not since been touched. I walked with the girl to the entrance of the deck-house, the door of which faced forward. She entered the structure, and, while I waited outside, lighted a bull's-eye lamp, with which she rejoined me, and together we went forward to another house built abaft of the galley. This had been the place in which the crew slept. The carpenter's chest was here, and also the sounding-rod. We then went to the pumps, and while I held the lamp she dropped the rod down the sounding-pipe, drew it up and brought it to the light and examined it, and named the depth of water there was in the hold. I do not recollect the figure, but I remember that, though it was significant, there was nothing greatly to alarm us in it, seeing how heavily and how frequently the bark had been flooded with the seas, and how much of the water might have made its way from above.

I recount this little passage in a few lines, yet it forms one of the most sharp-cut of the memories of my adventure. The picture is before me as I write. I see the pair of us as we come to a dead stand, grasping each other for support, while the vessel rolls madly over on the slope of some huge hurtling sea; I see the bright glare from the bull's-eye lamp in the girl's hand, dancing like a will-o'-the-wisp upon the black flood betwixt the rails washing with the slant of the decks to our knees; I see her dropping the rod down the tube, coolly examining it, declaring its indication; while, to the flash of the lamp-light, I catch an instant's glimpse of her face, shining out white—large-eyed as it seemed to me—upon the blackness rushing in thunder athwart the deck.

She led the way into the deck-house. There was a small lantern wildly swinging at a central beam—my companion had lighted it when she procured the bull's-eye lamp—it diffused a good luster, and I could see very plainly. It was just a plain, ordinary, shipboard interior, with three little windows of a side, a short table, lockers on either hand, and a sleeping-berth, or cabin, designed for the captain's use, aft; the companion-hatch, which led to the deck below, was betwixt the after end of the cabin and the bulkhead of the berth, but the rapid glance I threw around speedily settled, as you

may suppose, into a look—a long look—full of curiosity, surprise, and admiration, at the girl.

She stood before me dressed as a sailor lad, in a suit of pilot cloth and a red silk handkerchief round her throat, but her first act on entering was to remove her cloth cap, that was streaming wet, and throw it down upon the table; and thus she stood with her eyes fixed on me, as mine were on her, each of us surveying the other. Her hair was cut short, and was rough and plentiful, without remains of any sort of fashion in the wearing of it—nay, indeed, it was unparted. It was very fair hair, and as pale as amber in the lamp-light. Her eyebrows were of a darker color, and very perfectly arched, as though penciled. It was impossible to guess the hue of her eyes by that light: they seemed of a very dark blue, such as might prove violet in the sunshine, soft and liquid, and of an expression even in that hour of peril, of the horror of tempest, of the prospect of death—indeed, that might make one readily suppose her of a nature both sweet and merry. There was no sign of exposure to the weather upon her face; she was white with the paleness of fatigue and emotion. Her cheeks were plump, her mouth small, the under lip a little pouted, and her teeth pearl-like and very regular. Even by the light in which I now surveyed her I never for a moment could have mistaken her for a lad. There was nothing in her garb to neutralize for an instant the suggestions of her sex.

"I will take you to my father," said she, "but you must first eat and drink."

I could not have told how exhausted I was until I sunk down upon a locker and rested my arms upon the table. I was too wearied to ask the questions that I should have put to her at another time, and could do no more than watch her, with a sort of dull wonder at her nimbleness, and the spirit and resolution of her movements as she lifted the lid of the locker and produced a case-bottle of Hollands, some cold meat, and a tin of white biscuits.

"We have no bread," said she, smiling; "we obtained some loaves off the Isle of Wight, but the last was eaten yesterday."

She took a tumbler from a rack and mixed a draught of the Hollands with some water which she got from a filter fixed to a stanchion, and extended the glass.

"Pray let me follow you," said I. She shook her head. "Yes!" I cried, "God knows you should need some such tonic more than I!"

I induced her to drink, and then took the glass and emptied it. A second dram warmed and heartened me. I was with-

out appetite, but was willing to eat for the sake of such strength as might come from a meal. The girl made herself a sandwich of biscuit and meat, and we fell to. And so we sat facing each other, eating, staring at each other; the pair of us all the while hearkening with all our ears to the roaring noises outside, to the straining sounds within the ship, and feeling—I speak of myself—with every nerve tense as a fiddle-string, the desperate slants and falls and uprisals of the deck or platform upon which our feet rested.

CHAPTER V.

DAWN.

THERE was refreshment, however, to every sense, beyond language to express, in the shelter which this deck-house provided after our long term of exposure to the pouring of the raging gale, into which was put the further weight of volumes of spray, that swept to the face like leaden hail, and carried the shriek of the shot of musketry as it slung past the ear. It was calm in this deck-house; the deafening sounds without came somewhat muffled here; but the furious motion of the vessel was startingly illustrated by the play of the hanging lantern, and the swing of the illuminated globe was made the wilder and more wonderful by the calm of the atmosphere in which it oscillated.

"I do not think the sea is breaking over the ship," said the girl, gazing at me in a posture of listening. "It is hard to tell. I feel no tremble as of the fall of water on the deck."

"She is battling bravely," said I; "but what now would I give for even a couple of those men of yours who jumped into the life-boat! It is our being so few—two of us only, and you a woman—that makes our situation so hard."

"I have not the strength of a man," said she, with a smile, and fastening her soft eyes on my face; "but you will find I have the heart of one. Will you come now and see my father?"

I at once rose and followed her. She knocked upon a little door where the bulkhead partitioned off the inner cabin, and then entered, bidding me follow her.

A cot swung from the upper deck, and in it sat a man almost upright, his back supported by bolsters and pillows; a bracket lamp burned steadily over a table, upon which lay a book or two, a chart, a few nautical instruments, and the like. There was no convenience for dressing, and I guessed

that this had been a sort of chart-room which the captain had chosen to occupy that he might be easily and without delay within hail or reach of the deck.

He was a striking-looking man, with coal-black hair, parted on one side, lying very flat upon his head, and curling down upon his back. He wore a long goat-beard and mustache, and was somewhat grim with several days' growth of whisker upon his cheeks; his brows were thickly thatched, his forehead low, his eyes very dark, small, and penetrating. He was of a death-like whiteness, and showed, to my fancy, as a man whose days were numbered. That his disease was something more than rheumatism there was no need to look at him twice to make sure of. His daughter addressed him in the Danish tongue, then, recollecting herself, with a half glance at me of timid apology, she exclaimed:

"Father, this is Mr. Hugh Tregarthen, the noble gentleman who commanded the life-boat, who risked his life to save ours, and I pray that God of His love for brave spirits may restore him in safety to those who are dear to him."

Captain Nielsen, with a face contracted into a look of pain by emotion, extended his hand in silence over the edge of his cot. I grasped it in silence too. It was ice cold. He held me, gazing for awhile, without speech, into my eyes, and I thought to see him shed tears; then, putting his other hand upon mine in a caressing gesture, and letting it go, for the swing of the cot would not permit him to retain that posture of holding my hand for above a moment or two, he exclaimed in a low but quite audible voice: "I ask the good and gracious God of heaven and earth to bless you, for *her* sake—for my Helga's sake—and in the name of those who have perished but whom you would have saved!"

"Captain Nielsen," said I, greatly moved by his manner and looks, "would it had pleased Heaven that I should have been of solid use to you and your men. I grieve to find you in this helpless state. I hope you do not suffer?"

"While I rest I am without pain," he answered; and I now observed that though his accent had a distinctly Scandinavian harshness, such as was softened in his daughter's speech by the clearness—I may say, by the melody—of her tones, his English was as purely pronounced as hers. "But if I move," he continued, "I am in agony. I can not stand; my legs are as idle and as helpless as though paralyzed. But now tell me of the 'Anine,' Helga," he cried, with a look of pathetic eager yearning entering his face as he addressed her. "Have you sounded the well?"

"Yes, father."

"What water, my child?" She told him. "Ha!" he exclaimed, with a sudden fretfulness; "the pump should be manned without delay; but who is there to work it?"

"We two will, very shortly," she exclaimed, turning to me; "we require a little breathing time. Mr. Tregarthen and I," said she, still talking with her soft appealing eye upon me, "have strength, or, at all events, courage enough to give us strength; and he will help me in whatever we may think needful to save the 'Anine' and our lives."

"Indeed, yes!" said I.

"Pray sit, both of you," cried Captain Nielsen; "pray rest. Helga, have you seen to the gentleman's comfort? Has he had any refreshment?"

She answered him, and seated herself upon a little locker, inviting me with a look to sit beside her, for there was no other accommodation in that cabin than the locker.

"I wish I could persuade your daughter to take some rest," said I. "Her clothes, too, are soaked through!"

"It is salt water," said Captain Nielsen; "it will not harm her. She is very used to salt water, sir;" and then he addressed his daughter in Danish. The resemblance of some words he used to our English made me suppose he spoke about her resting.

"The pumps must be worked," said she, looking at me; "we must keep the bark afloat first of all, Mr. Tregarthen. How trifling is want of sleep, how insignificant the discomfort of damp clothes, at such a time as this!"

She opened her jacket and drew a silver watch from her pocket, and then took a bottle of medicine and a wine-glass from a small circular tray swinging by thin chains near the cot, and gave her father a dose. He began now to question us, occasionally in his hurry and eagerness speaking in the Danish language. He asked about the masts—if they were sound, if any sails had been split, if the "Anine" had met with any injury apart from the loss of her two boats, of which he had evidently been informed by his daughter. A flush of temper came into his white cheeks when he talked of his men. He called the carpenter Damm a villain, said that had he had his way the bark never would have brought up in that bay, that Damm had carried her there, as he now believed, as much out of spite as out of recklessness, hoping no doubt that the "Anine" would go ashore, but of course taking it for granted that the crew would be rescued. He shook his fist as he pronounced the carpenter's name, and then groaned aloud with

anguish to some movement of his limbs brought about by his agitation. He lay quiet a little and grew calm, and talked, with his thin fingers locked upon his breast. He informed me that the "Anine" was his ship, that he had spent some hundreds of pounds in equiping her for this voyage, that he had some risk in the cargo, and that, in a word, all that he was worth in the wide world was in this fabric, now heavily and often madly laboring, unwatched, amid the blackness of the night of hurricane.

"Your daughter and I must endeavor to preserve her for you," said I.

"May the blessed God grant it!" he cried. "And how good and heroic are you to speak thus!" said he, looking at me. "Surely your great Nelson was right when he called us Danes the brothers of the English. Brothers in affection may our countries ever be! We have given you a sweet princess—that is a debt it will tax your people's generosity to repay." The soft smile that lighted up his face as he spoke made me see a resemblance in him to his daughter. It was like throwing a light upon a picture. He was now looking at her with an expression full of tenderness and concern.

"Mr—Mr.—" he began.

"Tregarthen," said his daughter.

"Ay, Mr. Tregarthen," he continued, "will wonder that a girl should be clad as you are, Helga. Were you ever in Denmark, sir?"

"Never," I replied.

"You will not suppose, I hope," said he, with another soft, engaging smile that was pathetic also with the meaning it took from his white face, "that Helga's attire is the costume of Danish ladies?"

"Oh, no," said I. "I see how it is. Indeed, Miss Nielsen explained. The dress is a whim. And then it is a very convenient shipboard dress. But she should not be suffered to do the rough work of a sailor. Will you believe, Captain Nielsen, that she went out upon the bowsprit, and cut adrift or loosed the staysail there when your bark was on her beam ends in the trough of the sea?"

He nodded with emphasis, and said: "That is nothing, Helga has been to sea with me now for six years running. It is her delight to dress herself in boy's clothes—ay, and to go aloft and do the work of a seaman. It has hardened and spoiled her hands, but it has left her face fair to see. She is a good girl; she loves her poor father; she is motherless, Mr. Tregarthen. Were my dear wife alive Helga would not be

here. She is my only child;" and he made as if to extend his arms to her, but immediately crossed his hands, again addressing her in Danish as though he blessed her.

I could perceive the spirit in her struggling with the weakness that this talk induced. She conquered her emotions with a glance at me that was one almost of pride, as though she would bid me observe that she was mistress of herself, and said, changing the subject, but not abruptly: "Father, do you think the vessel can struggle on without being watched or helped from the deck?"

"What can be done?" he cried. "The helm is securely lashed hard a-lee?" She nodded. "What can be done?" he repeated. "Your standing at the wheel would be of no use. What is the trim of the yards?"

"They lie as they were braced up in the bay," she responded.

"I have been in ships," said he, "that always managed best when left alone in hard weather of this kind. There was the old 'Dannebrog,'" he went on, with his eyes seeming to glisten to some sudden stir of happy memory in him. "Twice when I was in her—once in the Baltic, once in the South Atlantic—we met with gales, well, perhaps, not such a gale as this; but it blew very fiercely, Mr. Tregarthen. The captain, my old friend Sorensen, knew her as he knew his wife. He pointed the yards, lashed the helm, sent the crew below and waited, smoking his pipe, in the cabin till the weather broke. She climbed the seas dryly, and no whale could have made better weather of it. A ship has an intelligence of her own. It is the spirit of the sea that comes into her, as into the birds or fish of the ocean. Observe how long a vessel will wash about after her crew have abandoned her. They might have sunk her had they stayed, not understanding her. Much must be left to chance at sea, Helga. No; there is nothing to be done. Damm reported the hatch-covers on and everything secure while in the bay. It is so still, of course. Yet it will ease my mind to know she is a little freed of the water in her."

"I am ready!" cried I. "Is the pump too heavy for my arms alone? I can not bear to think of your daughter toiling upon that wet and howling deck."

"She will not spare herself, though you should wish it," said her father. "What is the hour, my dear?"

She looked at her watch. "Twenty minutes after two."

"A weary long time yet to wait for the dawn!" said he. "And it is Sunday morning—a day of rest for all the world save for the mariner. But it is God's own day, and when

next Sabbath comes round we may be worshiping Him ashore, and thanking Him for our preservation."

As he pronounced these words, Helga, as I will henceforth call her, giving me a glance of invitation, quitted the berth, and I followed her into the cabin, as I may term the interior of the deck-house. She picked up the bull's-eye lamp and trimmed the mesh of it, and, arming herself with the sounding-rod, stepped on to the deck. I watched her movements with astonishment and admiration. I should have believed that I possessed fairly good sea-legs, even for a wilder play of plank than this which was now tossing us; nevertheless, I never dared let go with my hands, and there were moments when the upheaval was so swift, the fall so sickening, that my brain reeled again, and to have saved my life I could not have stirred the distance of a pace until the sensation had passed. But excepting an occasional pause, an infrequent grasp at what was next her during some unusually heavy roll, Helga moved with almost the same sort of ease that must have been visible in her on a level floor. Her figure indeed seemed to float; it swayed to the rolling of the deck as a bubble hovers perpendicular upon the pipe-stem you sharply incline under it.

After the comparative calm of the shelter I stepped from, the uproar of the gale seemed as though it were blowing as hard again as at the time of our quitting the deck. The noise of the rushing and roaring waters was deafening; as the vessel brought her masts to the windward, the screaming and whistling aloft are not to be imagined. The wind was clouded with spray, the decks sobbed furiously with wet, and it was still as pitch-black as ever it had been at any hour of the night. Helga threw the light of the bull's-eye upon the pump-brake or handle, and we then fell to work. At intervals we could contrive to hear each other speak—that is to say, in some momentary lull, when the bark was in the heart of a valley ere she rose to the next thunderous acclivity, yelling in her rigging with the voice of a wounded giantess. For how long we stuck to that dismal clanking job I can not remember. The water gushed copiously as we plied the handle, and the foam was all about our feet as though we stood in a half fathom's depth of surf. I was amazed by the endurance and pluck of the girl, and, indeed, I found half my strength in her courage. Had I been alone, I am persuaded I should have given up. The blow of the wheel that had dashed me into unconsciousness, coming on top of my previous labors, not to speak of that exhaustion of mind which follows upon such distress of heart as my situation and the memory of my foundered boat and the

possible loss of all her people had occasioned in me, must have proved too much but for the example and influence, the inspiriting presence of this little Danish lioness, Helga.

In one of those intervals I have spoken of, she cried out: "We have done enough—for the present;" and so saying she let go of the pump-handle and asked me to hold the lamp while she dropped the rod. I had supposed our efforts insignificant, and was surprised to learn that we had sunk the water by some inches. We returned to the deck-house, but scarcely had I entered it when I was seized with exhaustion so prostrating that I fell, rather than seated myself, upon the locker, and hid my face in my arms upon the table till the sudden darkness should have passed from my eyes. When, presently, I looked up, I found Helga at my side with a glass of spirits in her hand. There was a wonderful anxiety and compassion in her gaze.

"Drink this!" said she. "The work has been too hard for you. It is my fault—I am sorry—I am sorry."

I swallowed the draught, and was the better for it.

"This weakness," said I, "must come from the blow I got on deck. I have kept you from your father. He will want your report," and I stood up.

She gave me her arm, and but for that support I believe I should not have been able to make my way to the captain's berth, so weak did I feel in the limbs, so paralyzing to my condition of prostration was the violent motion of the deck.

Captain Nielsen looked eagerly at us over the edge of his cot. Helga would not release me until I was seated on the locker.

"Mr. Tregarthen's strength has been overtaxed, father," said she.

"Poor man! poor man!" he cried. "God will bless him. He has suffered much for us."

"It must be a weakness, following my having been stunned," said I, ashamed of myself that I should be in need of a girl's pity at such a time—the pity of a girl, too, who was sharing my labors and danger.

"What have you to tell me, Helga?" exclaimed the captain.

She answered him in Danish, and they exchanged some sentences in that tongue.

"She is a tight ship," cried the captain, addressing me; "it is good news," he went on, his white countenance lighted up with an expression of exultation, "to hear that you two should be able to control the water in the hold. Does the weather seem to moderate?"

"No," said I, "it blows as hard as ever it did."

"Does the sea break aboard?"

"There is plenty of water washing about," said I, "but the vessel seems to be making a brave fight."

"When daylight comes, Helga," said he, "you will hoist a distress color at the mizzen-peak. If the peak be wrecked or the halyards gone, the flag must be seized to the mizzen-shrouds."

"I will see to all that, father," she answered; "and now, Mr. Tregarthen, you will take some rest."

I could not bear the idea of sleeping while she remained up; yet though neither of us could be of the least use on deck, our both resting at once could not be thought of, if it was only for the sake of the comfort that was to be got out of knowing that there was somebody awake and on watch.

"I will gladly rest," said I, "on condition that you now lie down and sleep for two or three hours."

She answered no; she was less tired than I; she had not undergone what I had suffered in the life-boat. She begged me to take some repose.

"It is my selfishness that entreats you," said she; "if you break down what are my father and I to do?"

"True," I exclaimed, "but the three of us would be worse off still if *you* were to break down."

However, as I saw that she was very much in earnest, while her father also joined her in entreating me to rest, I consented on her agreeing first to remove her soaking clothes, for it was miserable to see her shivering from time to time and looking as though she had just been dragged over the side, and yet bravely disregarding the discomfort, smiling as often as she addressed me and conversing with her father with a face of scrutiny, plainly striving to soothe and reassure him by an air of cheerful confidence.

She left the cabin, and Captain Nielsen talked of her at once; told me that her mother was an English woman, that he was married in London, in which city he had lived from time to time, that Helga had received a part of her education at Newcastle-on-Tyne, where his wife's family then lived, though they were now scattered, or perhaps dead, only one member to his knowledge still residing at Newcastle. He took Helga to sea with him, he said, after his wife died, that he might have her under his eye, and such was her love for the sea, such her intelligent interest in everything which concerned the ship, that she could do as much with a vessel as he himself, and had often, at her own request, taken charge for a watch, during which she had shortened canvas and put the craft about as though,

in short, she had been skipper. The poor man seemed to forget his miserable situation while he spoke of Helga. His heart was full of her; his eyes swam with tears, while he cried: "It is not that I fear death for myself, nor for myself do I dread the loss of my ship, which would signify beggary for me and my child. It is for her—for my little Helga. We have many friends at Kolding, where I was born, and at Bjert, Vonsild, Skandrup, and at other places. But who will help the orphan? My friends are not rich—they could do little, no matter how generous their will. I pray God, for my child's sake, that we may be preserved—ay, and for your sake—I should have said that," he added, feebly smiling, though his face was one of distress.

He was beginning to question me about my home, and I was telling him that my mother was living, and that she and I were alone in the world, and that I feared she would think me drowned, and grieve till her heart broke, for she was an old lady, and I was her only son, as Helga was his only daughter, when the girl entered, and I broke off. She had changed her attire, but her clothes were still those of a lad. I had thought to see her come in dressed as a woman, and she so interpreted the look I fastened upon her, for she at once said without the least air of confusion, as though, indeed, she were sensible of nothing in her apparel that demanded an excuse from her: "I must preserve my sailor's garb until the fine weather comes. How should I be able to move about the decks in a gown?"

"Helga," cried her father, "Mr. Tregarthen is the only son of his mother, and she awaits his return."

Instantly entered an expression of beautiful compassion into her soft eyes. Her gaze fell, and she remained for a few moments silent, the lamp-light shone upon her tumbled hair, and I am without words to make you see the sweet sorrowful expression of her pale face as she stood close against the door, silent and looking down.

"I have kept my word, Mr. Tregarthen," said she, presently. "Now you will keep yours and rest yourself. There is my father's cabin below."

I interrupted her: "No; if you please, I will lie down upon one of the lockers in the deck-house."

"It will make a hard bed," said she.

"Not too hard for me," said I.

"Well, you shall lie down upon one of those lockers, and you shall be comfortable, too;" and, saying this, she went out again, and shortly afterward returned with some rugs and a

bolster. These she placed upon the lee locker, and a minute or two later I had shaken the poor captain by the hand, and had stretched myself upon the rugs, where I lay listening to the thunder of the gale and following the wild motions of the bark, and thinking of what had happened since the life-boat summons had rung me into this black and frothing and roaring night from my snug fireside.

It was not long, however, before I feel asleep. I had undergone some life-boat experiences in my time, but never before was nature so exhausted in me. The roaring of the gale, the cannonading of the deck-house by incessant heavy showerings of water, the extravagant motions of the plunging and rolling vessel, might have been a mother's lullaby sung by the side of a gently rocked cradle, so deep was the slumber these sounds of thunder left unvexed.

I awoke from a dreamless, death-like sleep, and opened my eyes against the light of the cold stone-gray dawn, and my mind instantly coming to me, I sprung from the locker, pausing to guess at the weather from the movement and the sound. So far as I might there know it was still blowing a whole gale of wind, and I was unable to stand without grasping the table for support. The deck-house door was shut, and the planks within were dry, though I could hear the water gushing and pouring in the alley betwixt the deck-house and the bulwarks. I thought to take a view of the weather through one of the windows, but the glass was everywhere blind with wet.

At this moment the door of the captain's berth was opened, and Helga stepped out. She immediately approached me with both hands extended in the most cordial manner imaginable.

"You have slept well," she cried; "I bent over you three or four times. You are the better for the rest, I am sure."

"I am, indeed!" said I. "And you?"

"Oh, I shall sleep by and by. What shall we do for hot water? It is impossible to light the galley fire; yet how grateful would be a cup of hot tea or coffee!"

"Have you been on deck," said I, "while I slept?"

"Oh, yes, in and out," she answered. "All is well so far —I mean, the 'Anine' goes on making a brave fight. The dawn has not long broken. I have not yet seen the ship by daylight. We must sound the well, Mr. Tregarthen, before we break our fast—my fear is there," she added, pointing to the deck, by which she signified the hold.

There was but little of her face to be seen. She was wearing an India-rubber cap shaped like a sou'-wester, the brim of

which came low, while the flannel ear-flaps almost smothered her cheeks. I could now see, however, that her eyes were of a dark blue, with a spirit of life and even of vivacity in them that expressed a wonderful triumph of heart over the languor of frame indicated by the droop of the eyelids. A little of her short hair of pale gold showed under the hinder thatch of the sou'-wester; her face was blanched. But I could not look at the pretty mouth, the pearl-like teeth, the soft blue eyes, the delicately figured nostril, without guessing that in the hour of bloom this girl would show as bonnily as the fairest lass of cream and roses that ever hailed from Denmark.

We stepped on to the deck—into the thunder of the gale and the flying clouds of spray. I still wore my oilskins, and was as dry in them as at the hour of leaving home. I felt the comfort, I assure you, of my high sea-boots, as I stood upon that deck, holding on a minute to the house front, with the water coming in a little rage of froth to my legs and washing to leeward with the *scend* of the bark with the force of a river overflowing a dam.

Our first glance was aloft. The foretopgallant-mast was broken off at the head of the topmast and hung with its two yards supported by its gear, but giving a strange, wrecked look to the whole of the fabric up there as it swung to the headlong movements of the hull, making the spars, down to the solid foot of the foremast, tremble with the spearing blows it dealt. The jibbooms were also gone, and this, no doubt, had happened through the carrying away of the topgallant-mast; otherwise all was right up above, assuming, to be sure, that nothing was sprung. But the wild, soaked, desolate—the almost mutilated—look, indeed, of the bark! How am I to communicate the impression produced by the soaked dark lines of sail-cloth rolled upon the yards, the ends of rope blowing out like the pennant of a man-of-war, the arched and gleaming gear, the decks dusky with incessant drenchings and emitting sullen flashes as the dark flood upon them rolled from side to side! The running-rigging lay all about, working like serpents in the wash of the water; from time to time a sea would strike the bow and burst on high in steam-like volumes which glanced ghastly against the leaden sky that overhung us in strata of scowling vapor, dark as thunder in places, yet seemingly motionless. A furious Atlantic was running! it came along in hills of frothing green which shaped themselves out of a near horizon thick with storms of spume. But there was the regularity of the unfathomed ocean in the run of the surge, mountainous as it was; and the bark, with her lashed

helm, not a rag showing save a tatter or two of the foresail whose head we had exposed on the previous night, soared and sunk, with her port bow to the sea, with the regularity of the tick of a clock.

There was nothing in sight. I looked eagerly round the sea, but it was all thickness and foam and headlong motion. We went aft to the compass to observe if there had happened any shift in the wind, and what the trend of the bark was, and also to note the condition of the wheel, which could only have been told in the darkness by groping. The helm was perfectly sound, the lashings held bravely. I could observe now that the wheel was a small one, formed of brass, also that it worked the rudder by means of a screw, and it was this purchase or leverage, I suppose, that had made me find the bark easy to steer while she was scudding. The gale was blowing fair out of the north-east, and the vessel's trend, therefore, was on a dead south-west course, with the help of a mountainous sea besides, to drive her away from the land, beam on. I cried to Helga that I thought our drift would certainly not be less than four, and perhaps five miles in the hour. She watched the sea for a little, and then nodded to me; but it was scarcely likely that she could conjecture the rate of progress amid so furious a commotion of waters, with the great seas boiling to the bulwark rail, and rushing away to leeward in huge round backs of freckled green.

She was evidently too weary to talk, rendered too languid by the bitter cares and sleepless hours of the long night to exert her voice so as to render herself audible in that thunder of wind which came flashing over the side in guns and bursts of hurricane power; and to the few sentences I uttered, or rather shouted, she responded by nods and shakes of the head as it might be. There was a flag-locker under the gratings abaft the wheel, and she opened the box, took out a small Danish ensign, bent in on to the peak-signal halyard, and between us we ran it half-mast high, and there it stood, hard and firm as a painted board, a white cross on red ground, and the red of it made it resemble a tongue of fire against the soot of the sky. This done, we returned to the main-deck, and Helga sounded the pump. She went to work with all the expertness of a seasoned salt, carefully dried the rod and chalked it, and then waited until the roll of the bark brought her to a level keel before dropping it. I watched her with astonishment and admiration. It would until now have seemed impossible to me that any mortal woman should have had in her the makings of so nimble and practiced a sailor as I found her to be,

with nothing, either, of the tenderness of girlhood lost in her, in speech, in countenance, in looks, spite of her boy's clothes. She examined the rod, and eyed me with a grave countenance.

"Does the water gain?" said I.

"There are two more inches of it," she answered, "than the depth I found in the hold last night when I first sounded. We ought to free her somewhat."

"I am willing," I exclaimed, "but are you equal to such labor? A couple of hours should not make a very grave difference."

"No, no!" she interrupted, with a vehemence that put her air of weariness to flight. "A couple of hours would be too long to wait." Saying which she grasped the brake and we went to work as before.

No one who has not had to labor in this way can conceive the fatigue of it. There is no sort of shipboard work that more quickly exhausts. It grieved me to the soul that my associate in this toil should be a girl, with the natural weakness of her sex accentuated yet by what she had suffered and was still suffering; but her spirited gaze forbade remonstrance. She seemed scarcely able to stand when utter weariness forced her at last to let go of the brake. Nevertheless, she compelled her feeble hands again to drop the rod down the well. We reduced the water to the height at which we had left it before, and, with a faint smile of congratulation, she made a movement toward the deck-house; but her gait was so staggering, there was such a character of blindness, too, in her posture as she started to walk, that I grasped her arm and, indeed, half carried her into the house.

She sat and rested herself for a few minutes, but appeared unable to speak. I watched her anxiously, with something of indignation that her father, who professed to love her so dearly, should not come between her and her devotion, and insist upon her resting. Presently she rose and walked to his cabin, telling me with her looks to follow her.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN NIELSEN.

CAPTAIN NIELSEN was veritably corpse-like in aspect viewed by the cold gray iron light sifting through the little windows out of the spray-shrouded air. The unnatural brightness of his eyes painfully defined the attenuation of his face, and the sickly, parchment-like complexion of his skin. He extended

his hand, but could hardly find time to deliver a greeting, so violent was his hurry to receive his daughter's report. He shook his head when he heard that his topgallant-mast and jib-booms were wrecked, and passionately exclaimed in Danish, on his daughter telling him of the increase of water in the hold:

"She must be taking it in from below." He then cried, in English: "She has strained herself. Should this continue, what is to be done? She will need to be constantly pumped—and ah, my God! you are but two."

"Yes, captain," cried I, incensed that he should appear to have no thoughts but for the ship; "but if you do not insist upon your daughter taking some rest there will be but one, long before this gale has blown itself out."

"Oh, my dear, it is so!" he exclaimed, looking at her on a sudden with impassioned concern. "Mr. Tregarthen is right. You will sink under your efforts. Your dear heart will break. Rest now—rest, my beloved child! I command you to rest! You must go below; you must lie in your own cabin. This good gentleman is about—he will sit with me and go forth and report. The 'Anine' tends herself, and there is nothing in human skill to help her outside what she can herself do."

"But we must not starve, father," she answered; "let us first breakfast, as best we can, and then I will go below."

She left the cabin and promptly returned, bringing with her the remains of the cold meat we had supped off, some biscuit, and a bottle of red wine. Her father drank a little of the wine, and eat a morsel of biscuit; indeed, food seemed to excite a loathing in him. I saw that Helga eyed him piteously, but she did not press him to eat: it might be that she had experience of his stubbornness. She said, in a soft aside, to me: "His appetite is leaving him, and how can I tempt him without the means of cooking? Does not he look very ill this morning?"

"It is worry, added to rheumatic pains," said I. "We must get him ashore as soon as possible, where he can be nursed in comfort."

But though these words flowed readily, out of my sympathy with the poor, brave, suffering girl, they were assuredly not in correspondence with my secret feelings. It was not only I was certain that Captain Nielsen lay in his cot a dying man; the roaring of the wind, the beating of the sea against the bark, the wild extravagant leapings and divings, the perception that water was draining into the hold, and that there were but two of us—and one of those two a girl—to work the

pumps, made a mockery to my heart of my reference to the captain getting ashore and being nursed there.

We sat in that slanting and leaping interior with plates on our knees. The girl feigned to eat; her head drooped with weariness, yet I noticed that she would force a cheerful note into the replies she made to her father's ceaseless feverish questions. When we had ended our meal, she left us to go below to her cabin; but before leaving she asked me, with eyes full of tender pleadings, to keep her father's heart up, to make the best of such reports as I might have to give to him after going out to take a look round; and she told me he would need his physic at such and such a time, and so lingered, dwelling upon him and glancing at him; and then she went out in a hurry with one hand upon her breast, yet not so swiftly but that I could see her eyes were swimming.

"There is a barometer in the cabin," said Captain Nielsen: "will you tell me how the mercury stands?"

The glass was fixed to the bulkhead outside. I returned and gave him the reading.

"'Tis a little rise!" he cried, with his unnaturally bright eyes eagerly fastened upon me.

I would not tell him that it was not so—that the mercury, indeed, stood at the level I had observed on the preceding day in my glass in the life-boat house.

"Fierce weather of this sort," said I, "soon exhausts itself."

He continued to stare at me, but now with an air of musing that somewhat softened the painful brilliant intentness of his regard.

"I pray God," said he, "that this weather may speedily enable us to obtain help, for I fear that if I am not treated I shall get very low, perhaps die. I am ill—yet what is my malady? This rheumatism is a sudden seizure. I could walk when at Cuxhaven."

In as cheerful a voice as I could assume, I begged him to consider that his mind might have much to do with those bodily sensations which made him feel ill.

"It may be so, it may be so," he exclaimed, with a sad smile of faltering hope. "I wish to live. I am not an old man. It will be hard if my time is to come soon. It is Helga—it is Helga," he muttered, pressing his brow with his thin hand. I was about to speak. "How wearisome," he broke out, "is this ceaseless tossing! I ran away to sea; it was my own doing. I had my childish dreams—strange and beautiful fancies of foreign countries—and I ran away;" he went on

in a rambling manner like one thinking aloud. "And yet I love the old ocean, though it is serving me cruelly now. It has fed me—it has held me to its breast—and my nourishment and life has come from it." He started, and, bringing his eyes away from the upper deck on which they had been fixed while he spoke, he cried: "Sir, you are a stranger to me, but you are an Englishman of heroic heart, and you will forgive me. Should I die, and should God be pleased to spare you and my child, will you protect her until she has safely returned to her friends at Kolding? She will be alone in any part of the world until she is there, and if I am assured that she will have the generous compassion of your heart with her, a guardian to take my place until she reaches Kolding, it will make me easy in my ending, let the stroke come when it will."

"I came to this ship to save your lives," I answered. "I hope to be an instrument yet of helping to save them. Trust me to do your bidding, if it were only for my admiration of your daughter's heroic qualities. But do not speak of dying, Captain Nielsen—"

He interrupted me. "There is my dear friend, Pastor Blicker of Kolding, and there is Pastor Jansen of Skandrup. They are good and gentle Christian men, who will receive Helga, and stand by her and soothe her and counsel her as to my little property—ah, my little property!" he cried. "If this vessel founders, what have I?"

"Pray," said I, with the idea of quietly coaxing his mind into a more cheerful mood, "what is so seriously wrong with you, captain, that you should lie there gloomily foreboding your death? Such rheumatism as yours is not very quick to kill."

"I was long dangerously ill of a fever in the West Indies," he answered, "and it left a vital organ weak. The mischief is here, I fear," said he, touching his right side above his hip. "I felt very ill at Cuxhaven; but this voyage was to be made; I am too poor a man to suffer my health to forfeit the money that was to be got by it. Hark! what was that?"

He leaned his head over the cot, straining his hearing with a nervous fluttering of his emaciated fingers. It was miserable to see how white the skin of his sunken cheeks showed against the whiteness of the canvas of his cot.

"I heard nothing," I answered.

"It was the noise of a blow," he exclaimed. "Pray go and see if anything is wrong," he added, speaking out of his habit of giving orders, and with a peremptoriness that forced a smile from me as I went to the door.

I made my way through the house on to the deck, and looked about me, but it was the same scene to stare at and hearken to that I had viewed before: the same thunder and shriek of wind, the same clouding of the forward part of the bark in foam, the same miserable dismal picture of water flashing from bulwark to bulwark, of high green frothing seas towering past the line of the rail as the vessel swung in a smother of seething yeast into the trough.

I caught sight of a long hen-coop abaft the structure in which the sailors had lived, with the red gleam of a cock's comb betwixt a couple of the bars, and guessing that the wretched inmates must by this time be in sore need of food and water, I very cautiously made my way to the coop, holding on by something at every step. The coop was, indeed, full of poultry, but all lay drowned.

I returned to the deck-house and mounted on top of it, where I should be able to obtain a good view of as much of the ocean as was exposed, and where also I should be out of the wet which, on the main-deck, rolled with weight enough at times to sweep a man off his legs. The roof of the house, if I may so term it, was above the rail, and the whole fury of the gale swept across it. I never could have guessed at the hurricane force of the wind while standing on the deck beneath. It was impossible to face it; if I glanced but one instant to windward my eyes seemed to be blown into my head.

I had not gained that elevation above a minute when I heard a sharp rattling aloft, and, looking upward, I perceived that the main-royal had blown loose. For the space of a breath or two it made the rattling noise that had called my attention to it, then the whole bladder-like body of it was swept in a flash away from the yard, and nothing remained but a whip or two streaming straight out like white hair from the spar. A moment later the maintopgallant-sail, that had been, no doubt, hastily and badly furled, was blown out of the gaskets. I thought to see it go as the royal had, but while I watched, waiting for the flight of the rags of it down into the leeward gloom of the sky, the mast snapped off at the cap at the instant of the sail bursting and disappearing like a gush of mist, and down fell the whole mass of hamper to a little below the stay, under which it madly swung, held by the backstays.

This disaster, comparatively trifling as it was, gave the whole fabric a most melancholy, wrecked look. It affected me in a manner I should not have thought possible in one who knew so much about the sea and shipwreck as I. It oppressed me as an omen approaching dissolution. "What in God's name

can save us?'' I remember thinking, as I brought my eyes away from the two broken masts, swinging and spearing high up under the smoke-colored, compacted, apparently stirless heaps of vapor stretching from sea-line to sea-line. "What put together by mortal hands can go on resisting this ceaseless, tremendous beating?'' and as I thus thought, the vessel, with a wild sweep of her bow, smote a giant surge rushing laterally at her, and a whole green sea broke roaring over the forecastle, making every timber in her tremble with a volcanic thrill, and entirely submerging the fore part in white waters, out of which she soared with a score of cataracts flying in smoke from her sides.

I looked for the flag that Helga and I had half-masted a little while before; it had as utterly disappeared from betwixt its toggles as though the bunting had been ripped up and down by a knife. As I was in the act of dragging myself along to the ladder to go below, I spied a sort of smudge oozing out of the iron-hued thickness past the head of a great sea whose arching peak was like a snow-clad hill. I crouched down to steady myself, and presently what I had at first thought to be some dark shadow of cloud upon the near horizon grew into the proportions of a large ship, running dead before the gale under a narrow band of main-topsail.

She was heading to pass under our stern, and rapidly drew out, and in a few minutes I had her clear—clean and bright as a new painting against the background of shadow, along whose dingy, misty base the ocean line was washing in flickering green heights. She was a large steam frigate, clearly a foreigner, for I do not know that our country had a ship of the kind afloat at the time. She had a white band, broken by ports, and the black and gleaming defenses of her bulwarks were crowned with stowed hammocks. Her topgallant-masts were housed, and the large cross-trees and huge black tops and wide spread of shrouds gave her a wonderfully heavy, massive, ship-of-war look aloft. The band of close-reefed main-topsail had the glare of foam as it swung majestically from one sea-line to the other, slowly swaying across the dark and stooping heaven with a noble and solemn rhythm of movement. I could never have imagined a sight to more wholly fascinate my gaze. Always crouching low, I watched her under the shelter of my hands locked upon my brow. I beheld nothing living aboard of her. She came along as though informed by some spirit and government of her own. As her great stem sunk to the figure-head there arose a magnificent boiling, a mountainous cloud of froth on either bow of her,

and the roar of those riven seas seemed to add a deeper tone of thunder to the gale. All was taut aboard—every rope like a ruled line—different, indeed, from our torn and wrecked and trailing appearance on high! She swept past within a quarter of a mile of us, and what pen could convey the incredible power suggested by that great fabric as her stern lifted to the curl of the enormous Atlantic surge, and the whole ship rushed forward on the hurling froth of the sea with an electric velocity that brought the very heart into one's throat.

She was a mere smudge again—this time to leeward—in a few minutes. I could only stare at her. Our flag had blown away, I was without power to signal, and, even if I had been able to communicate our condition of distress, what help could she have offered? What could she have done for us in such a sea as was now running? Yet the mere sight of her had heartened me. She made me feel that help could never be wanting in an ocean so plowed by keels as the Atlantic.

I crawled down on to the quarter-deck, and returned to the captain's cabin. The poor man at once fell with feverish eagerness to questioning me. I told him honestly that the main-topgallant-mast had been carried away while I was on deck, but that there was nothing else wrong that I could distinguish; that the bark was still making a noble fight, though there were times when the seas broke very fiercely and dangerously over the forecastle.

He wagged his head with a gesture of distress, crying: "So it is! so it is! One spar after another, and thus may we go to pieces!"

I told him of the great steam frigate that had passed. But to this piece of news he listened with a vacant look, and apparently could think of nothing but his spars. He asked in a childish, fretful way how long Helga had been below, and I answered him stoutly not nearly long enough for sleep.

"Ay," cried he, "but the bark needs to be pumped, sir."

"Your daughter will work the better for rest," said I, and then looking at my watch I found it was time to give him his physic.

He exclaimed, looking at the wine-glass: "There is no virtue in this stuff. The sufferer can make but one use of it;" and, still preserving a manner of curious childishness, he emptied the contents of the glass over the edge of his cot on to the deck, and, as he swung, lay watching the mess of it on the floor with a smile. I guessed that expostulation would be fruitless, and, indeed, having but very little faith myself in any sort of physic, I secretly applauded his behavior.

I sat down upon the locker, and, leaning my back against the bulkhead, endeavored, by conversation, to bring a cheerful look to his countenance; but his mood of depression was not to be conquered. At times he would ramble a little, quote passages from Danish plays in his native tongue, then pause with his head on one side as though waiting for me to applaud what he forgot I did not understand.

"How fine is this from 'Palnatoke!'" he would cry, "or hark to this from that noble performance 'Hacon Yarl!' Ah, it is England alone can match Oehlenschläger."

I could only watch him mutely. Then he would break away to bewail his spars again, and to cry out that Helga would be left penniless, would be a poor beggar girl, if his ship foundered.

"But is not the 'Anine' insured?" said I.

"Yes," he answered, "but not by me. I was obliged to borrow money upon her, and she is insured by the man who lent me the money."

"But you have an interest in the cargo, Captain Nielsen?"

"Ay," cried he, "and that I insured; but what will it be worth to my poor little Helga?"—and he hid his face in his hands and rocked himself.

However, he presently grew somewhat composed, and certainly more rational, and, after awhile, I found myself talking about Tintrenale, my home and associations, my life-boat excursions, and the like; and then we conversed upon the course that was to be adopted should the weather moderate and find us still afloat. We should be able to do nothing, he said, without assistance from a passing ship, in the sense of obtaining a few sailors to work the bark; or a steamer might come along that would be willing to give us a tow.

"The Land's End can not be far off," said he.

"No," said I, "not if this gale means to drop to-day. But it will be far enough off if it is to go on blowing."

He inquired what I made the drift to be, and then calculated that the English coast would now be bearing about east-north-east, sixty miles distant. "Let the wind chop round," cried he, with a gleam in his sunken eye, "and you and Helga would have the 'Anine' in the channel before midnight."

We continued to talk in this strain, and he seemed to forget the wretchedness of our situation; then suddenly he called out to know the time, abruptly breaking away from what he was saying.

"Hard upon eleven o'clock," said I.

"This will not do," he cried. "The bark, as we talk, is

filling under our feet. The well should be sounded. Helga must be called. I beseech you to call Helga," he repeated, nervously, smiting the side of his cot with his clinched hand. "Ah, God!" he added, "that I should be without the power to move!"

"I will sound the well," said I. "Should I find an increase I will arouse your daughter."

"Go, I beg of you!" he cried, in high notes. "The bark seems sodden to me. She does not lift and fall as she did."

I guessed this to be imagination, but the mere fancy of such a thing being true frightened me also, and I hastily went out. I dried the rod and chalked it as Helga had, and, watching my chance, dropped it, and found five inches of water above the level our last spell at the pump had left in the hold. I was greatly startled, and to make sure that my first cast was right, I sounded a second time, and sure enough the rod showed five inches, as before. I hastened with the news to the captain.

"I knew it! I feared it!" he cried, his voice shrill with a very ecstasy of hurry, anxiety, and sense of helplessness that worked in him. "Call Helga—lose not an instant—run, I beg you will run."

"But run where?" cried I. "Where does the girl sleep?"

"Go down the hatchway in the deck-house," he shouted, in shrill accents, as though bent upon putting into this moment the whole of his remaining slender stock of vitality. "There are four cabins under this deck. Hers is the aftermost one on the starboard side. Don't delay! If she does not instantly answer, enter and arouse her;" and as I sped from the cabin I heard him crying that he knew by the motions of the ship she was filling rapidly, and that she would go down on a sudden like lead.

It was a black square trap of hatchway into which I looked a moment before putting my legs over. There was a short flight of almost perpendicular steps conducting to the lower deck. On my descending I found the place so dark that I was forced to halt till my eyes should grow used to the obscurity. There was a disagreeable smell of cargo down here, and such a heart-shaking uproar of straining timbers, or creaking bulkheads, of the thumps of seas and the muffled, yearning roar of the giant waters sweeping under the vessel, that for a little while I stood as one utterly bewildered.

Soon, however, I managed to distinguish outlines, and with outstretched hands and wary legs made my way to the cabin that Captain Nielsen had indicated, and beat upon the door. There was no response. I beat again, listening, scarcely think-

ing, perhaps, that the girl would require a voice as keen as a boatswain's pipe to thread the soul-confounding and brain-muddling clamor in this after-deck of the storm-beaten bark. "He bade me enter," thought I, "and enter I must, if the girl is to be aroused;" and I turned the handle of the door and walked in.

Helga lay, attired as she had left the deck, in an upper bunk, through the port-hole of which the daylight, bright with the foam, came and went upon her face as the vessel at one moment buried the thick glass of the scuttle in the green blindness of the sea and then lifted it, weeping and gleaming into the air. Her head was pillowed on her arm; her hair in the weak light showed as though touched by a dull beam of the sun. Her eyes were sealed; their long lashes put a delicate shading under them; her white face wore a sweet expression of happy serenity, and I could believe that some glad vision was present to her. Her lips were parted in the expression of a smile.

There was a feeling in me as of profanity in this intrusion, and of wrong-doing in the obligation forced upon me of waking her from a peaceful, pleasant, all-important repose to face the bitter hardships and necessities of that time of tempest. But for my single arms the pump was too much, and she must be aroused. I lightly put my hand upon hers, and her smile was instantly more defined, as though my action were coincident with some phase of her dream. I pressed her hand; she sighed deeply, looked at me, and instantly sat up with a little frown of confusion.

"Your father begged me to enter and arouse you," said I. "I was unable to make you hear by knocking. I have sounded the well, and there is an increase of five inches!"

"Ah!" she exclaimed, and sprung lightly out of her bunk. In silence and with amazing dispatch, seeing that a few seconds before she was in a deep sleep, she put on her sea-helmet, whipped a handkerchief round her neck, and was leading the way to the hatch on buoyant feet.

On gaining the deck I discovered that the wrecked appearance of the ship aloft had been greatly heightened during my absence below by the fore-topsail having been blown into rags. It was a single sail, and the few long strips of it which remained blowing out horizontally from the yards stiff as crowbars gave an indescribable character of forlornness to the fabric. Helga glanced aloft, and immediately perceived that the maintopgallant-mast had been wrecked, but said nothing, and in a minute the pair of us were hard at work.

I let go the brake only when my companion was too exhausted to continue; but now, on sounding the well, we found that our labors had not decreased the water to the same extent as heretofore. It was impossible, however, to converse out of shelter; moreover, a fresh danger attended exposure on deck, for, in addition to the wild sweeping of green seas forward, to the indescribably violent motions of the bark which threatened to break our heads or our limbs for us, to fling us bruised and senseless against the bulwarks if we relaxed for a moment our hold of what was next us—in addition to this, I say, there was now the deadly menace of the topgallant-mast, with its weight of yards, fiercely swinging and beating right over our heads, and poised there by the slender filaments of its rigging, which might part and let the whole mass fall at any moment.

We entered the deck-house, and paused for a little while in its comparative silence and stagnation to exchange a few words.

"The water is gaining upon the ship, Mr. Tregarthen," said Helga.

"I fear so," I answered.

"If it should increase beyond the control of the pumps, what is to be done?" she asked. "We are without boats."

"What *can* be done?" cried I. "We shall have to make some desperate thrust for life—contrive something out of the hencoop—spare booms—whatever is to be found."

"What chance—what chance have we in such a sea as this?" she exclaimed, looking up at me with eyes large with emotion, though I found nothing of fear in the shining of them or in the working of her pale sweet face.

I had no answer to make. Indeed, it put a sort of feeling into the blood like madness itself even to talk of a raft with the sound in our ears of the sea that was raging outside.

"And then there is my father," she continued, "helpless—unable to move—how is he to be rescued? I would lose my life to save his. But what is to be done if this gale continues?"

"His experience should be of use to us," said I. "Let us go and talk with him."

She opened the door of the berth, halted, stared a minute, then turned to me with her forefinger upon her lip. I peered, and found the poor man fast asleep. I believed at first that he was dead, so still he lay, so easy was his countenance, so white too; but, after watching a moment, I spied his breast rising and falling. Helga drew close, and stood viewing him. A strange and moving sight was that swinging cot, the revelation

of the death-like head within, the swaying boyish figure of a daughter gazing with eyes of love, pity, distress at the sleeping, haggard face as it came and went.

She sat down beside me. "I shall lose him soon," said she; "but what is killing him? He was white and poorly yesterday; but not ill as he is now."

It would have been idle to attempt any sort of courage. The truth was as plain to her as to me. I could find nothing better to say than that the gale might cease suddenly, that a large steam frigate had passed us a little while before, that some vessel was sure to heave into sight when the weather moderated, and that meanwhile our efforts must be directed to keeping the vessel afloat. I could not again talk of the raft; it was enough to feel the sickening tossing of the ship under us to render the thought of *that* remedy for our state horrible and hopeless.

The time slowly passed. It was drawing on to one o'clock. I went on deck to examine the helm and to judge of the weather; then sounded the well, but found no material increase of water. The bark, however, was rolling so furiously that it was almost impossible to get a correct cast. Before re-entering the house I sent a look round from the shelter of the weather bulwark to observe what materials were to be obtained for a raft should the weather suffer us to launch such a thing and the bark founder spite of our toil. There was a number of spare booms securely lashed upon the top of the seamen's deck-house and galley, and these, with the hen-coop and hatch-covers, and the little casks or scuttle-butts out of which the men drank, would provide us with what we needed. But the contemplation of death itself was not so dreadful to me as the prospect which this fancy of a raft opened. I hung crouching under the lee of the tall bulwark, gnawing my lip as thought after thought arose in me, and digging my finger-nails into the palms of my hands. The suddenness of it all! The being this time yesterday safe ashore, without the dimmest imagination of what was to come—the anguish of my poor old mother—the perishing, as I did not doubt, of my brave comrades of the life-boat—then this vessel slowly taking in water, dying as it were by inches, and as doomed as though hell's curse were upon her, unless the gale should cease and help come!

I could not bear it. I started to my feet with a sense of madness upon me, with a wild and dreadful desire in me to show mercy to myself by plunging and silencing the delirious fancies of my brain in the wide sweep of seething waters that rushed from the very line of the rail of the bark as she leaned to her

beam ends in the thunderous trough of that instant. It was a sort of hysteria that did not last; yet might I have found temptation and time in the swift passage of it to have destroyed myself, but for God's hand upon me, as I choose to believe, and to be ever thankful for!

CHAPTER VII.

THE RAFT.

How passed the rest of this the first day of my wild and dangerous adventure, of Helga's and my first day of suffering, peril, and romantic experience, I can not clearly recall. A few impressions only survive. I remember returning to the deck-house and finding the captain still sleeping. I remember conversing with Helga, who looked me very earnestly in the face when I entered, and who, by some indefinable influence of voice and eye, coaxed me into speaking of my fit of horror on deck. I remember that she left me to obtain some food, which, it seems, was kept in one of the cabins below, and that she returned with a tin of preserved meat, a little glass jar of jam, a tin of biscuits, and a bottle of red wine like to what we had before drunk—a very pleasant well-flavored claret; that all the while we eat, her father slept, which made her happy, as she said he needed rest, not having closed his eyes for three nights and days, though it was wonderful to me that he should have fallen asleep in such a mood of excitement and of consternation as I had left him in; but as to his slumbering amid that uproar of straining timbers and flying waters, it is enough to say that he was a seaman.

I also recollect that throughout the remainder of the day we worked the pump at every two hours or thereabouts; but the water was unmistakably gaining upon the bark, and to keep her free would have needed the incessant plying of the pumps—both pumps at once—by gangs of fellows who could relieve one another and rest between. Helga told me that her father had given orders for a wind-mill pump to be rigged, Scandanavian fashion, but that there had been some delay, and so the bark sailed without it. I said that no wind-mill pump would have stood up half an hour in such a gale of wind as was blowing; but all the same, I bitterly lamented that there was nothing of the sort aboard, for these wind-mill arrangements keep the pumps going by the revolution of their sails, and such a thing must have proved inexpressibly valuable when the weather should moderate, so as to allow us to erect it.

The captain slept far into the afternoon, but I could not ob-

serve, when he awoke, that he was the better for his long spell of rest. I entered his cabin fresh from a look round on deck, and found him just awake, with his eyes fixed upon his daughter, who sat slumbering upon the locker, with her back against the cabin wall and her pale face bowed upon her breast. He immediately attacked me with questions, delivered in notes so high, penetrating, and feverish with hurry and alarm that they awoke Helga. We had to tell him the truth—I mean, that the water was gaining, but slowly, so that it must conquer us if the gale continued, yet we might still hope to find a chance for our lives by keeping the pump going. He broke into many passionate exclamations of distress and grief, and then was silent, with the air of one who abandons hope.

"There are but two, and one of them a girl," I heard him say, lifting his eyes to the deck above as he spoke.

The night was a dreadful time to look forward to. While there was daylight, while one could see, one's spirits seemed to retain a little buoyancy; but, speaking for myself, I dreaded the effects upon my mind of a second interminable time of blackness, filled with the horrors of the groaning and howling gale, of the dizzy motion of the tormented fabric, of the heart-subduing noises of waters pouring in thunder and beating against and over the struggling vessel.

Well, there came round the hour of nine o'clock by my watch. Long before, after returning from a spirit-breaking spell of toil at the pump, we had lighted the deck-house and binnacle lamps, had eaten our third meal that day to answer for tea or supper, and at Helga's entreaty I had lain down upon the deck-house locker to sleep for one hour or so if I could, while she went to watch by her father and to keep an eye upon the ship by an occasional visit to the deck.

We had arranged that she should awaken me at nine, that we should then apply ourselves afresh to the pump, that she should afterward take my place upon the locker till eleven, I, meanwhile, seeing to her father and to the bark, and that we should thus proceed in these alternations throughout the night. It was now nine o'clock. I awoke, and was looking at my watch when Helga entered from the deck. She came up to me and took my hands, and cried:

"Oh! Mr. Tregarthen, there are some stars in the sky. I believe the gale is breaking."

Only those who have undergone the like of such experiences as these I am endeavoring to relate can conceive of the rapture, the new life her words raised in me.

"I praise God for your good news!" I cried, and made a step to the barometer to observe its indications.

The rise of the mercury was a quarter of an inch, and this had happened since a little after seven. Yet, being something of a student of the barometer in my little way, I could have heartily wished the rise much more gradual. It might betoken nothing more than a drier quality of gale, with nothing of the old fierceness wanting. But then, to be sure, it might promise a shift, so that we stood a chance of being blown homeward, which would signify an opportunity of preservation that must needs grow greater as we approached the English Channel.

I went with Helga on deck, and instantly saw the stars shining to windward betwixt the edges of clouds which were flying across our mastheads with the velocity of smoke. The heaven of vapor that had hung black and brooding over the ocean for two days was broken up; where the sky showed it was pure, and the stars shone in it with a frosty brilliance. The atmosphere had wonderfully cleared; the froth glanced keenly upon the hurling shadows of the seas, and I believed I could follow the clamorous mountainous breast of the ocean to the very throb of the horizon, over which the clouds were pouring in loose masses, scattering scud-like as they soared, but all so plentiful that the heavens were thick with the flying wings.

But there was no sobering of the wind. It blew with its old dreadful violence, and the half-smothered bark climbed and plunged and rolled amid clouds of spray in a manner to make the eyes reel after a minute of watching her. Yet the mere sight of the stars served as a sup of cordial to us. We strove at the pump, and then Helga lay down; and in this manner the hours passed till about four o'clock in the morning, when there happened a sensible decrease in the wind. At dawn it was still blowing hard, but long before this, had we had sailors, we should have been able to expose canvas, and start the bark upon her course.

I stood on top of the deck-house watching the dawn break. The bleak gray stole over the frothing sea and turned ashen the curve of every running surge. To windward the ocean line went twisting like a corkscrew upon the sky and seemed to boil and wash along it as though it were the base of some smoking wall. There was nothing in sight. I searched every quarter with a passionate intensity, but there was nothing to be seen. But now the sea had greatly moderated, and, though the decks still sobbed with wet, it was only at long intervals that the foam flew forward. The bark looked fearfully wrecked, stranded, and sodden. All her rigging was slack, the decks

were encumbered with the ends of ropes, the weather side of the mainsail had blown loose and was fluttering in rags, though to leeward the canvas lay furled.

I went on to the quarter-deck and sounded the well. Practice had rendered me expert, and the cast, I did not doubt, gave me the true depth, and I felt all the blood in me rush to my heart when I beheld such an indication of increase as was the same as hearing one's funeral knell rung, or of a verdict of death pronounced upon one.

I entered the deck-house with my mind resolved, and seated myself at the table over against where Helga lay sleeping upon the locker, to consider a little before arousing her. She showed very wan, almost haggard, by the morning light; her parted lips were pale, and she wore a restless expression even in her sleep. It might be that my eyes being fixed upon her face aroused her; she suddenly looked at me, and then sat up. Just then a gleam of misty sunshine swept the little windows.

"The bad weather is gone!" she cried.

"It is still too bad for us, though," said I.

"Does the wind blow from the land?" she asked.

"Ay! and freshly too."

She was now able to perceive the meaning in my face, and asked me anxiously if anything new had happened to alarm me. I answered by giving her the depth of water I had found in the hold. She clasped her hands and started to her feet, but sat again on my making a little gesture.

"Miss Nielsen," said I, "the bark is taking in water very much faster than we shall be able to pump it out. We may go on plying the pump, but the labor can only end in breaking our hearts and wasting precious time that might be employed to some purpose. We must look the truth in the face, and make up our minds to let the vessel go, and to do our best, with God's help, to preserve our lives."

"What?" she asked, in a low voice, that indicated awe rather than fear, and I noticed the little twitch and spasm of her mouth swiftly vanish in an expression of resolution.

"We must go to work," said I, "and construct a raft, then get everything in readiness to sway it overboard. The weather may enable us to do this. I pray so. It is our only hope, should nothing to help us come along."

"But my father?"

"We shall have to get him out of his cabin on to the raft."

"But how? But how?" she cried, with an air of wildness. "He can not move!"

"If we are to be saved, he must be saved, at all events,"

said I. "What then can be done but to lower him in his cot, as he lies, on to the deck and so drag him to the gangway and sling him on to the raft by a tackle?"

"Yes," she said, "that can be done. It will have to be done." She reflected, with her hands tightly locked upon her brow. "How long do you think," she asked, "will the 'Anine' remain afloat if we leave the pumps untouched?"

"Your father will know," said I. "Let us go to him."

Captain Nielsen sat erect in his cot munching a biscuit.

"Ha!" he cried as we entered. "We are to have pleasant weather. There was some sunshine upon that port just now. What says the barometer, Mr. Tregarthen?" Then contracting his brow while he peered at his daughter as though he had not obtained a view of her before, he exclaimed: "What is the matter, Helga? What have you come to tell me?"

"Father," she answered, sinking her head a little and so looking at him through her eyelashes, "Mr. Tregarthen believes, and I can not doubt it, for there is the sounding-rod to tell the story, that water is fast entering the 'Anine,' and that we must lose no time to prepare to leave her."

"What!" he almost shrieked, letting fall his biscuit and grasping the edge of his cot with his emaciated hands, and turning his body to us from the waist, leaving his legs in their former posture as though he were paralyzed from the hips down. "The 'Anine' sinking? prepare to leave her? Why, you have neglected the pump, then!"

"No, captain, no," I answered. "Our toil has been as regular as we have had strength for. Already your daughter has done too much; look at her!" I cried, pointing to the girl. "Judge with your father's eye for how much longer she is capable of holding out!"

"The pump must be manned!" he exclaimed, in such another shrieking note as he had before delivered. "The 'Anine' must not sink; she is all I have in the world. My child will be left to starve! Oh, she has strength enough. Helga, the gentleman does not know your strength and courage! And you, sir—you, Mr. Tregarthen—ach! God! You will not let your courage fail you—you who came here on a holy and beautiful errand—no, no! you will not let your courage fail you, now that the wind is ceasing and the sun has broken forth and the worst is past?"

Helga looked at me.

"Captain Nielsen," said I, "if there were a dozen of us we might hope to keep your ship long enough afloat to give us a chance of being rescued; but not twelve, nor fifty men

could save her for you. The tempest has made a sieve of her, and what we have now to do is to construct a raft while we have time and opportunity, and to be ceaseless in our prayers that the weather may suffer us to launch it and to exist upon it until we are succored."

He gazed at me with a burning eye, and breathed as though he must presently suffocate.

"Oh, but for a few hours' use of my limbs!" he cried, lifting his trembling hands. "I would show you both how the will can be made to master the body's weakness. Must I lie here without power?" and as he said these words he grasped again the edge of his cot, and writhed so that I was almost prepared to see him heave himself out; but the agony of the wrench was too much; his face grew whiter still, he groaned low, and lay back, with his brow glistening with sweat-drops.

"Oh, father!" cried Helga, "bear with us! Indeed it is as Mr. Tregarthen says. I feared it last night, and this morning has made me sure. We must not think of the ship, but of ourselves, and of you, father, dear—of you, my poor, dear father!" She broke off with a sob.

I waited till he had recovered a little from the torment he had caused himself, and then gently, but with a manner that let him know that I was resolved, began to reason with him. He lay, apparently, listening apathetically; but his nostrils, wide with breathing, and the hurried motions of his breast were warrant enough of the state of his mind. While I addressed him Helga went out, and presently returned with the sounding-rod, dark with wet fresh from the well. He turned his feverish eyes upon it, but merely shook his head and lightly wrung his hands.

"Father, you see it for yourself!" she cried.

"Miss Nielsen," said I, "we are wasting precious minutes. Will your father tell you what depth of water his ship must take in to founder?"

He, poor fellow, made no response, but continued to stare at the rod in her hand as though his intelligence on a sudden was all abroad.

"Shall we go to work?" said I. She looked at her father wistfully. "Come," I exclaimed, "we know we are right. We must make an effort to save ourselves. Are not our lives our first consideration?"

I stepped to the door; as I put my hand to it, Captain Nielsen cried: "If you do not save the ship, how will you save yourselves?"

"We must at once put some sort of raft together," said I, halting.

"A raft! in this sea!" he clasped his hands and uttered a low mocking laugh that was more than shocking in him than the maddest explosion of temper could have shown.

I could no longer linger to hear his objections. Helga might be very dear to him, but his ship stood first in his mind, and I had no idea of breaking my heart at the pump and then of being drowned after all. My hope was indeed a forlorn one, but it was a chance also; whereas, I knew that the ship would give us no chance whatever. Besides, our making ready for the worst would not signify that we should abandon the vessel until her settling forced us over the side. And was the gentle, heroic Helga to perish without a struggle on my part, because her father clung with a sick man's craziness—which in health he might be quick to denounce—to this poor tempest-strained bark that was all he had in the world?

I went out and on to the deck, and was standing thinking a minute upon the raft and how we should set about it, when Helga joined me.

"He is too ill to be reasonable," she exclaimed.

"Yes," said I, "but we will save him, and ourselves too, if we can. Let us lose no more time. Do you observe that the wind has sensibly decreased even while we have been talking in your father's cabin? The sky has opened more yet to windward, and the seas are running with much less weight."

As I spoke the sun flashed into a rift in the vapor sweeping down the eastern heaven, and the glance of the foam to the splendor, and the sudden brightening of the cloud-shadowed sea into blue, animated me, like some new-born hope, and was almost as invigorating to my spirits as though my eyes had fallen upon the gleam of a sail heading our way.

I should but weary you to relate, step by step, how we went to work to construct the raft. The motion of the deck was still very violent, but it found us now as seasoned as though we had kept the sea for years; and, indeed, the movement was becoming mere child's play after the tossing of the night. A long hour of getting such booms as we wanted off the sailors' house on to the deck, and of collecting other materials for our needs, was not, by a very great deal, so exhausting as ten minutes at the pump. We broke off a little after nine o'clock to get some food, and to enable Helga to see her father; and now the cast we took with the sounding-rod advised us, with most bitter significance of indication, that, even though my companion and I had strength to hold to the pump for a

whole watch—I mean for four hours at a spell—the water would surely, if but a little more slowly, vanquish us in the end. Indeed, there was no longer question that the vessel had, in some parts of her, been seriously strained, and, though I held my peace, my sincere conviction was that, unless some miracle arrested the ingress of the water, she would not be afloat at five o'clock that day.

By one we had completed the raft, and it lay against the main-hatch, ready to be swayed over the side and launched. I had some small knowledge of boat building, having acquired what I knew from a small yard down past the life-boat house at Tintrenale, where boats were built, and where I had killed many an hour, pipe in mouth, watching and asking questions, and even lending a hand; and in constructing this raft I found my slender boat-building experiences very useful. First we made a frame of four stout studding-sail booms, which we securely lashed to four empty casks, two of which lay handy to our use, while of the other two, one we found in the galley, a third full of slush, and the other in the cabin below where the provisions were stored. We decked the frame with booms, of which there was a number, as I have previously said, stacked on top of the sailors' deck-house, and to this we securely lashed planking, to which we attached some hatchway covers, binding the whole with turn upon turn of rope. To improve our chance of being seen, I provided for setting up a topgallant-studdingsail boom as a mast, at the head of which we should be able to show a color. I also took care to hedge the sides with a little bulwark of life-lines lest the raft should be swept. There were many interstices in this fabric fit for holding a stock of provisions and water.

I had no fear of its not floating high, nor of its not holding together; but it would be impossible to express the heaviness of heart with which I labored at this thing. The raft had always been the most dreadful nightmare of the sea to my imagination. The stories of the sufferings it had been the theater of were present to my mind as I worked, and again and again they would cause me to break off and send a despairing look round; but never a sail showed; the blankness was that of the heavens.

We had half-masted a second Danish ensign after coming out from breaking our fast, and one needed but to look at the breezy rippling of its large folds to know that the wind was becoming rapidly scant. By one o'clock, indeed, it was blowing no more than a pleasant air of wind, still out of the north-east. The stormy smoke-like clouds of the morning were gone, and the

sky was now mottled by little heaps of prismatic vapor that sailed slowly under a higher delicate shading of cloud, widely broken, and showing much clear liquid blue, and suffering the sun to shine very steadily. There was a long swell rolling out of the north-east; but the brows were so wide apart that there was no violence whatever in the swaying of the bark upon it. The wind crisped these swinging folds of water, and the surface of the ocean scintillated with lines of small seas crisping, with merry curlings, into foam. But it was fine-weather water, and the barometer had risen greatly, and I could now believe that there was nothing more in the rapidity of its indications than a promise of a pleasant day and of light winds.

I could have done nothing without Helga. Her activity, her intelligence, her spirit, were amazing, not indeed only because she was a girl, but because she was a girl who had undergone a day and two frightful nights of peril and distress, who had slept but little, and whose labors at the pump might have exhausted a seasoned sailor. She seemed to know exactly what to do, was wise in every suggestion, and I could never glance at her face without finding the sweetness of it rendered noble by the heroism of the heart that showed in her firm mouth, her composed countenance, and steadfast determined gaze.

At times we would break off to sound the well, and never without finding a fresh nimbleness coming into our hands and feet, a wilder desire of hurry penetrating our spirits from the assurance of the rod. Steadily, inch by inch, the water was gaining, and already at this hour of one o'clock it was almost easy to guess the depth of it by the sluggishness of the vessel's rolling, by the drowning character of her languid recovery from the slant of the swell. I felt terribly confident, however, that she would keep afloat for some hours yet, and God knows we could not have too much time granted to us, for there was much to be done; the raft to be launched and provisioned, and the hardest part was yet to come, I mean the bringing of the sick captain from his cabin and hoisting him over the side.

At one o'clock we broke off again to refresh ourselves with food and drink, and Helga saw to her father. For my part I would not enter his berth. I dreaded his expostulations and reproaches, and, indeed, I may say that I shrunk from even the sight of him, so grievous were his white face and dying manner —so depressing to me, who could not look at the raft and then turn my eyes upon the ocean without guessing that I was as fully a dying man as he, and that, when the sun set this night, it might go down forever upon us.

There was but one way of getting the raft over, and that was

by the winch and a tackle at the main yard-arm. Helga said she would take the tackle aloft, but I ran my eye over her boy-clad figure with a smile, and said "No." She was, indeed, a better sailor than I, but it would be strange, indeed, if I was unable to secure a block to the yardarm. We braced in the mainyard until the arm of it was fair over the gangway, and I then took the tackle aloft and attached the block by the tail of it.

I lay over the yard for a minute or two while I looked round; but the sea brimmed unbroken toward the sky, and I descended, again and again shuddering without control over myself, as I gazed at the little fabric of the raft and contrasted it with the size of the ship that was slowly foundering, and then with the great sea upon whose surface it would presently be afloat—the only object, perhaps, under the eyes of heaven for leagues and leagues!

Our business now was to get the raft over the side. I should have to fatigue and perhaps perplex you with technicalities exactly to explain our management of it. Enough if I say that, by hooking on the lower block of the tackle to ropes which formed slings for the raft, and by taking the hauling part to the winch, we very easily swayed the structure clear of the bulwark rail—for you must know that the winch, with its arrangements of handles, cogs, and pawls, is a piece of shipboard mechanism with which a couple of persons may do as much as a dozen might be able to achieve using their arms only.

When the raft was high enough Helga stood by the winch ready to slacken away on my giving the word of command, while I went to a line which held the fabric over the deck. This line I eased off until the raft had swung fairly over the water, and then called to Helga to slacken away, and the raft sunk, and in a minute or two was water-borne, riding upon the swell alongside, and buoyed by the casks even higher above the surface than I had dared hope.

"Now, Miss Nielsen!" cried I.

"Oh! pray call me Helga," she broke in; "it is my name: it is short! I seem to answer to it more readily, and in this time, this dreadful time, I could wish to have it, and none other!"

"Then, Helga," said I, even in such a moment as this feeling my heart warm to the brave, good, gentle little creature as I pronounced the word, "we must provision the raft without delay. Our essential needs will be fresh water and biscuit. What more have you in your provision-room below?"

"Come with me!" said she, and we ran into the deck-house

and descended the hatch, leaving the raft securely floating alongside, not only in the grip of the yardarm tackle, which the swaying of the vessel had fully overhauled, but in the hold of the line with which we had slacked the structure over the rail.

It was still dark enough below; but when we opened the door of the berth, in which as I have told you the cabin provisions were stowed, we found the sunshine upon the scuttle or port-hole, and the apartment lay clear in the light. In about twenty minutes, and after some three or four journeys, we had conveyed on deck as much provisions as might serve to keep three persons for about a month: cans of meat, some hams, several tins of biscuit, cheese, and other matters, which I need not catalogue. But we had started the fresh water in the scuttle-butts that they might be emptied to serve as floats for the raft, and now we had to find a cask or receptacle for drinking-water, and to fill it too from the stock in the hold. Here I should have been at a loss but for Helga, who knew where the bark's fresh water was stowed. Again we entered the cabin or provision-room, and returned with some jars whose contents we emptied —vinegar, I believe it was, but the hurry my mind was then in rendered it weak in its reception of small impressions; these we filled with fresh water from a tank conveniently stowed in the main hatchway, and as I filled them Helga carried them on deck.

While we were below at this work I bade her listen.

"Yes, I hear it!" she cried: "it is water in the hold."

With every sickly lean of the bark you could hear the water inside of her seething among the cargo as it cascaded now to port and now to starboard.

"Helga, she can not live long," said I. "I believe, but for the hissing of the water, we should hear it bubbling into her."

I handed her up the last of the jars, and grasped the coaming of the hatch to clamber on to the deck, for the cargo came high. As I did this, something seemed to touch and claw me upon the back, and a huge black rat of the size of a kitten flashed from my shoulder on to the deck and vanished in a breath. Helga screamed, and indeed, for the moment, my own nerves were not a little shaken, for I distinctly felt the wire-like whisker of the horrible creature brush my cheek as it sprung from my shoulder.

"If there be truth in the proverb," said I, "we need no surer hint of what is coming than the behavior of that rat."

The girl shuddered and gazed, with eyes bright with alarm,

into the hold, recoiling as she did so. I believe the prospect of drifting about on a raft was less terrible to her than the idea of a second rat leaping upon one or the other of us.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADRIFT!

It was necessary that we should have everything in readiness before we carried poor Captain Nielsen out of his cabin. I unshipped the gangway, and, watching an opportunity as the swell lifted the raft against the side of the bark stooping to it, I sprung; but I could not have imagined the weight and volume of the swell until I had gained the frail platform. Indeed, one could feel that the wrath kindled by the tempest still lived in the deep bosom of the ocean. It was like a stern, revengeful breathing; but the wind was light, and the water but delicately brushed, and it was easy to foresee that if no more wind blew the swell would have greatly flattened down by sunset. Yet the manner in which the hull and the raft came together terrified me with a notion of our contrivance going to pieces. I called to Helga, as she threw to me or handed the several parcels and articles we had collected upon the deck, that there was not a moment of time to waste—that we must get her father on to the raft without delay; and then, when I had hastily stowed the last of the things, I sprung aboard again, and was going straight to the captain's berth, when I suddenly stopped and exclaimed: "First, how is he to be removed?"

She eyed me piteously. Perhaps her seamanship did not reach to that height; or may be her fear that we should cause her father pain impaired her perception of what was to be done.

"Let me think now," said I. "It was certain that he must be lowered to the deck as he lies in his cot. Does he swing by hooks? I did not observe."

"Yes," she answered, "what you would call the clews come together to a point as in a hammock, and spread at the foot and head."

"Then there must be iron eyes in the upper deck," cried I, "to receive the hooks. Now see here; we shall have to get a sling at each end of the cot, attach a line to it, the ends of which we will pass through the eyes, and when this is done we will cut away the clews and so lower him. Yes, that will do," said I. "I have it," and looking about me for such a

thickness of rope as I needed, I overhauled some fathoms, passed my knife through the length, and together we hastened to the captain's berth.

"What is it now?" he asked, in a feeble voice, as we entered.

"Everything is ready, Captain Nielsen," said I; "there is no time to lose. The cargo is washing about in the hold, and the ship has not another hour of life left in her."

"What is it that you want?" said he, looking dully at the coil of rope I held in my hand.

"Father, we are here to carry you to the raft."

"To the raft!" he exclaimed, with an air of bewilderment, and then he added, while I noticed a little color of temper enter his cheeks: "I have nothing to do with your raft. It was in your power to save the poor 'Anine.' If she is to founder, I will go down with her."

So saying, he folded his arms upon his bosom in a posture of resolution, viewing me with all the severity his sickness would suffer his eyes to express. Nevertheless, there was a sort of silliness in the whole manner of him which might have persuaded the most heedless observer that the poor fellow was rapidly growing less and less responsible for his behavior. Had he been a powerful man, or, indeed, possessed the use of his extremities, I should have dreaded what is termed a "scene." As it was, nothing remained but to treat him as a child, to tackle him, with all tenderness, but as swiftly as possible, and to get him over the side.

There was a dreadful expression of distress in Helga's face when she looked at him; but her glances at me were very full of assurance that she was of my mind, and that she would approve and be with me in sympathy in whatever I resolved to do. Whipping out my knife, I cut lengths off the rope I held to make slings of. I carried one of these slings to the cot and passed it over the end. The captain extended his hand, and attempted to thrust me aside. The child-like weakness of that trembling push would, in a time of less wretchedness and peril than this, have unnerved me with pity.

"Bear with me! Be yourself, captain! Show yourself the true Danish sailor that you are at heart—for Helga's sake!" I exclaimed.

He covered his eyes and sobbed.

I secured the slings to the cot, and, until we lowered him to the deck, he held his face hidden in his hands. I wove two lengths of line through the iron eyes at which the cot slung, in the manner I had described to Helga, and when the weight of the cot was on these lines we belayed one end, holding by

the other. I then passed my knife through the "crow's-feet," as it would be called, or thin lines which supported the cot, and, going to the rope I had belayed, bid Helga lower her end as I lowered mine, and the cot descended safely to the deck. The girl then came round to the head of the cot, and together we dragged it out of the house on to the deck.

Saving a little wrench when we hauled the cot over the coaming of the deck-house door, the poor man was put to no pain. It was merciful indeed that he should have lain ill in the deck-house, for had he occupied a cabin below I can not imagine how we should have got him out on to the deck without killing him with the anguish which we should have been forced by our efforts to cause him.

When we had got him to the gangway I sprung on to the raft and caught hold of the block that dangled at the extremity of the yardarm tackle. With this I returned to the bark, and, just as we had got the raft over, so did we sway the poor captain on to her. I got on to the raft to receive him as Helga lowered the cot. He descended gently, and on my crying "Let go!" she swiftly released the line, and the tackle overhauled itself to the roll of the vessel.

I remember exclaiming "Thank God!" when this job was ended and I had unhooked the block, as though the worst was over; and indeed, in the mere business of abandoning the bark, the worst had ended with the bestowal of the sick and helpless captain on the raft. But what was now to begin? My "Thank God!" seemed to sound like a piece of irony in my heart when I looked from the deep, wet, gleaming side of the leaning hull waving her wrecked spars in the reddening light of the sun—when I looked from her, I say, to seaward, where the flowing lines of the lifting and falling swell were running bald and foamless into the south-west sky.

Helga came to the gangway and called to know if all were well with her father.

"All is well," I answered. "Come now, Helga! There is nothing to detain us. We shall be wise to cast adrift from the bark. She is very much down by the head, and the next dip may be her last."

"A few minutes can not signify," she cried. "There are one or two things I should like to bring with me. I wish to possess them, if we are preserved."

"Make haste, then!" I called. She disappeared, and I turned to the captain. He looked up at me out of his cot with eyes in which all the feverish fire of the morning was quenched,

"Is Helga remaining in the bark?" he asked, listlessly.

"God forbid!" cried I. "She will be with us in a minute or two."

"It is a cruel desertion," said he. "Poor 'Anine!' You were to have been kept afloat!"

It was idle to reason with him. He was clothed as I had found him when I had first seen him—in a waistcoat and serge coat, and a shawl round his neck; but he was without a hat—a thing to be overlooked at such a time as this—and the lower part of him was protected only by the blankets he lay under. There was still time to supply his requirements. I had noticed his wideawake and a long cloak hanging in his berth, and I immediately sprung on board, rushed aft, procured them, and returned. Helga was still below. I put the hat on the captain's head and clasped the cloak over his shoulders, fretting over the girl's absence, for every minute was communicating a deadlier significance to the languid, sickly, dying motions of the fast-drowning hull.

I think about ten minutes had passed since she left the bark's side to go to her cabin, when, bringing my eyes away from the sea, into whose eastern quarter I had been gazing with some wild hope or fancy in me of a sail down there—though it proved no more than a feather-tip of cloud—I saw Helga in the gangway. I say Helga, but for some moments I did not know her. I started and stared as if she had been a ghost. Instead of the boyish figure to which my sight was already used, there stood in the aperture, betwixt the bulwarks which we call the gangway, a girl who looked at least half a head taller than the Helga who had been my associate. I might have guessed at once that this appearance of stature in her was due to her gown, but, as I did not suspect that she had gone to change her dress, her suggestion of increased height completed the astonishment and perplexity with which I regarded her. She stood on the leaning and swaying side of the bark, as perfect a figure of a maiden as mortal eyes could wish to rest on. Her dress was of dark-blue serge that clung to her: she also wore a cloth jacket, thinly edged about the neck and where it buttoned with fur, and upon her head was a turban-shaped hat of sealskin, the dark glossy shade of which brightened her short hair into a complexion of the palest gold. She held a parcel in her hand, and called to me to take it from her. I did so, and cried:

"You will not be able to jump from the gangway. Get into the fore-chains, and I will endeavor to haul the raft up to you."

But even as I spoke she grasped her dress and disclosed her little feet, and with a bound gained the raft as it rose with the swell, yielding on her knees as she struck the platform with the grace that nothing but the teaching of old ocean could have communicated to her limbs.

"Thank God you are here!" I cried, catching her by the hand. "I was growing uneasy—in another minute I should have sought you."

She faintly smiled, and then turned eagerly to her father.

"I have mother's portrait," said she, pointing to the parcel, "and her Bible. I would not bring away more. If we are to perish, they will go with us."

He looked at her with a lack-luster eye, and in a low voice addressed a few words to her in Danish. She answered in that tongue, glancing down at her dress, and then at me, and added, in English: "It was time, father. The hard work is over. I may be a girl now," and looking along the sea she sighed bitterly.

Her father brought his knitted hands to his brow, and never could I have imagined the like of the look of mental anguish that was on his face as he did this. But what I am here narrating did not occupy above a minute or two. Indeed, a longer delay than this was not to have been suffered if we desired the raft to hold together. I let go the line that held the little structure to the bark, and getting the small studding-sail boom over—that is, the boom we had shipped to serve as a signal mast—I thrust with it, and, Helga helping me, we got the raft clear of the side of the vessel. The leewardly swell on which we rode did the rest for us, and not a little rejoiced was I to find our miserable fabric gradually increasing its distance from the 'Anine;' for if the bark foundered with us close alongside we stood to be swamped in the vortex, the raft scattered, and ourselves left to drown.

It now wanted about twenty minutes to sundown. A weak air still blew, but the few clouds that still lived in the heavens floated overhead apparently motionless; yet the swell continued large, to our sensations at least, upon that flat structure, and the slope of the platform rapidly grew so distressing and fatiguing to our limbs that we were glad to sit, and obtain what refreshment we could from a short rest.

Among the things we had brought with us was the bull's-eye lamp, together with a can of oil, a parcel of meshes, and some lucifer matches. I said to Helga:

"We should step or set up our mast before it grows dark."

"Why?" she inquired. "The flag we will hoist will not be

seen in the dark"—knowing that the mast was there for no other purpose than to display a flag on.

"But we ought to light the lamp and masthead it," said I, "and keep it burning all night—if God suffers us to live through the night. Who can tell what may come along—what vessel invisible to us may perceive the light?"

She answered quickly, "Yes. Your judgment is clearer than mine. I will help you to set up the mast."

Her father again addressed her in Danish. She answered him, and then said to me, "My father asks why we are without a sail?"

"I thought of a sail," I replied, speaking as I set about to erect the mast, "but without wind it could not serve us, and with wind it would blow away like a cobweb. It would have occupied too much time to rig and securely provide for a sail. Besides, our hopes could never be in the direction of such a thing. We must be picked up—there is no other chance for us."

The captain made no response, but sat, propped upon his pillows, motionless, his eyes fixed upon the bark.

The sun had sunk, but a strong scarlet yet glowed in the western sky by the time we had erected and stayed the spar. I then lighted the lamp and ran it aloft by means of a line and a little block which I had taken care to throw into the raft. This finished, we seated ourselves.

There was now nothing more to be done but watch and pray. This was the most solemn and dreadful moment that had as yet entered into the passage of our fearful and astonishing experience. In the hurry and agitation of leaving the bark there had been scarcely room for a pause. All we could think of was how quickly to get away, how speedily to equip and launch the raft, how to get Captain Nielsen over, and the like; but all this was ended: we could now think, and I felt as if my heart had been suddenly crushed in me as I sat on the slanting, falling and rising platform, viewing the bark, that lay painted in clear black lines against the fast-dimming glow in the west.

Helga sat close against her father's cot. So far as I was able to distinguish her face, there was profound grief in it and a sort of dismay, but no fear. Her gaze was steady, and the expression of her mouth firm. Her father kept his eyes rooted upon his ship. I overheard her address him once or twice in Danish, but, getting no reply, she sighed heavily, and held her peace. I was too exhausted in body and spirits to desire to speak. I remember that I sat, or rather squatted, Lascar-fashion, upon the hatch-cover that somewhat raised the

platform of the raft, with my hands clasped upon my shins and my chin on a level with my knees; and in this posture I continued for some time motionless, watching the "Anine" and waiting for her to sink, and realizing our shocking situation to the degree of that heart-crushing sensation in me which I have mentioned. I was exactly clad as I had been when I boarded the bark out of the life-boat. Never once, indeed, from the hour of my being in the vessel down to the present moment had I removed my oilskins, saving my sou'-wester, which I would take from my head when I entered the cabin; and I recollect thinking that it was better for me to be heavily than thinly clad, because, being a stout swimmer, a light dress would help me to a bitter long battle for life, whereas the clothes I had on must make the struggle brief and speedily drag me down into peace, which was, indeed, all that I could bring my mind to dwell upon now, for when I sent my glance from the raft to the darkling ocean I felt hopeless.

The rusty hectic died out. The night came alone in a clear dusk with a faint sighing of wind over the raft every time the swell threw her up. There was a silver curl of moon in the south-west, but she was without power to drop so much as a flake of her light into the dark shadow of water under her. Yet the starlight was in the gloom, and it was not so dark but that I could see Helga's face in a sort of glimmer, and the white outline of the cot and configuration of the raft upon the water in dusky strokes.

The bark floated at about a cable's length distant from us, a dark mass, rolling in a strangling manner, as I might know by the sickly slide of the stars in the squares of her rigging and along the pallid lines of the canvas stowed upon her yards. There was more tenacity of life in her than I should have believed possible, and I said to Helga:

"If this raft were a boat, I would board the bark and set her on fire. She may float through the night, for who is to know but that one of her worst leaks may have got choked, and the blaze she would make might bring us help."

The captain uttered some exclamation in Danish in a small but vehement and shrill tone. He had not spoken for above an hour, and I had believed him sleeping or dying and speechless.

"What does he say?" I called across softly to Helga.

"That the 'Anine' might have been saved had we stood by her," she answered, struggling, as I could hear by the tremor in her voice, to control her accents.

"No, no!" said I, almost gruffly, I fear, with the mood that was upon me of helplessness, despair, and the kind of rage that comes with the perception that one is doomed to die like a rat, without a chance, without a soul of all those one loves knowing one's fate. "No, no!" I cried, "the 'Anine' was not to be saved by us two, nor by twenty like us, Helga. You know that, for it is like making me responsible for our situation here to doubt it."

"I do not doubt it," she answered, firmly and reproachfully.

Captain Nielsen muttered in his native tongue; but I did not inquire what he said, and the hush of the great ocean night, with its delicate threading of complaining wind, fell upon us.

My temper of despair was not to be soothed by recollection of this time yesterday, by perception of the visible evidence of God's mercy in this tranquillity of sky and sea at a time when, but for the change of the weather, we had certainly been doomed. I was young; I passionately desired to live. Had death been the penalty of the life-boat attempt, I might, had time been granted me, contemplated my end with the fortitude that springs from the sense of having done well. But what was heroic in this business had disappeared out of it when the life-boat capsized and left me safe on board. It was now no more than a vile passage of prosaic shipwreck, with its attendant horror of lingering death, and nothing noble in what had been done, or that might yet have to be done, to prop up my spirits. Thus I sat full of wretchedness, and miserably thinking, mechanically eying the dusky heap of bark; then, breaking away from my afflicting reverie, I stood up, holding by the mast, to carefully sweep the sea, with a prayer for the sight of the colored gleams of a steamer's light, since there was nothing to be expected in the way of a sail in this calm that was upon the water.

I was thus occupied when I was startled by a strange cry—I can not describe it. It resembled the moan of a wild creature wounded to death, but with a human note in it that made the sound something not to be imagined. For an instant I believed it came from the sea, till I saw by the dim light of the star-shine the figure of Captain Nielsen, in a sitting posture, pointing with the whole length of his arm in the direction of his bark. I looked, and found the black mass of hull gone, and nothing showing but the dark line of spars and rigging, that melted out of my sight as I watched. A noise of rending, intermingled with the shock of an explosion, came from where she had disappeared. It signified no more than the blowing up of the decks as she sunk; but the star-studded

vastness of gloom made the sound appalling beyond language to convey.

"Help!" cried Helga. "My father is dying."

I gained the side of the cot in a stride and knelt by him, but there was no more to be seen of his face than the mere faint whiteness of it, and I could not tell whether his eyes were open or not. Imagining, but scarcely hoping, that a dram might put some life into the poor fellow, I lowered the bull's-eye lamp from the masthead to seek for one of the jars of spirits we had stowed, but when we came to put the tin pannikin to his lips we found his teeth set.

"He is not dead, Helga," I cried; "he is in a fit. If he were dead his jaws would drop," and this I supposed, though I knew little of death in those days.

I flashed the bull's-eye upon his face, and observed that though his eyes were open, the pupils were upturned and hidden. This, with the whiteness of the skin and the emaciation of the lineaments, made a ghastly picture of his countenance, and the hysteric sob that Helga uttered as she looked made me grieve that I should have thrown the light upon her father.

I mastheaded the lamp again, and crouched by the side of the cot talking to Helga across the recumbent form in it. Who could remember what was said at such a time? I weakly essayed to cheer her, but soon gave up, for here was the very figure of death himself lying between us, and there was death awaiting us in the black invisible folds in which we swung; and what had I to say that could help her heart at such a time? Occasionally I would stand erect and peer around. The weak wind that went moaning past us as the raft rose to the liquid heave had the chill in it of the ocean in October; and fearing that Helga's jacket did not sufficiently protect her, I pulled off my oilskin coat—there is no warmer covering for ordinary apparel—and induced her to put it on. Her father remained motionless, but by stooping my ear to his mouth I could catch the noise of his breathing as it hissed through his clinched teeth. Yet it was a sort of breathing that would make one expect to hear it die out in a final sigh at any minute.

I mixed a little spirits and water, and gave it to the girl, and obliged her to swallow the draught, and begged her to eat for the sake of the life and heart food would give her; but she said "No," and her frequent silent sobbing silenced me on that head, for how could one, grieving as she did, swallow food? I filled the pannikin for myself and emptied it, and eat a biscuit and a piece of cheese, which were near my hand in an interstice of the raft, and then lay down near the cot, supporting my

head on my elbow. Never did the stars seem so high, so infinitely remote, as they seemed to me that night. I felt as though I had passed into another world that mocked the senses with a few dim semblances of things which a little while before had been real and familiar. The very paring of the moon showed small as though looked at through an inverted telescope, and measurelessly remote. I do not know why this should have been, yet once afterward, in speaking of this experience to a man who, in a voyage to India, had fallen overboard on such another night as this and swum for three hours, he told me that the stars had seemed to him as to me, and the moon, which with him was nearly full, appeared to have shrunk to the size of the planet Venus.

After awhile the captain's breathing grew less harsh, and Helga asked me to bring the lamp that she might look at him. His teeth were no longer set, and his eyes as in nature, saving that there was no recognition in them, and I observed that he stared straight into the brilliant glass of magnified flame without winking or averting his gaze. I propped him up, and Helga put the pannikin to his lips, but the fluid ran from the corners of his mouth; upon which I let him rest upon his pillows, softly begging the girl to let God have His way with him.

"He can not last through the night," she exclaimed, in a low voice; and the wonderful stillness upon the sea, unvexed by the delicate winnowing of the draught, gathered to my mood an extraordinary emphasis from my being able to hear her light utterances as distinctly as though she whispered in a sick-room.

"You are prepared, Helga?" said I.

"No, no!" she cried, with a little sob. "Who can be prepared to lose one that is dearly loved? We believe we are prepared—we pray for strength; but the blow falls as though we were weak and unready. When he is gone, I shall be alone. And oh, to die here!"

We sunk into silence.

Another hour went by, and I believed I had fallen into a light, troubled doze, less sleepful than a waking day-dream, when I heard my name pronounced, and instantly started up.

"What is it?" I cried.

"My father is asking for you," answered Helga.

I leaned over the cot and felt for his hand, which I took. It was of a death-like coldness, and moist.

"I am here, Captain Nielsen," said I.

"If God preserves you," he exclaimed, very faintly, "you will keep your word?"

"Be sure of it—be sure of it," I said, knowing that he referred to what had passed between us about Helga.

"I thank you," he whispered. "My sight seems dark, yet is that not the moon down there?"

"Yes, father," answered the girl."

"Helga," he said, "did you not tell me you had brought your mother's likeness with you?"

"It is with us, and her Bible, father."

"Would to God I could look upon it," said he, "for the last time, Helga, for the last time!"

"Where is the parcel?" I asked.

"I have it close beside me," she answered.

"Open it, Helga!" said I. "The lamp will reveal the picture."

Again I lowered the bull's-eye from the masthead, and, while Helga held the picture before her father's face, I threw the light upon it. It was a little oil-painting in an oval gilt frame. I could distinguish no more than the face of a woman —a young face—with a crown of yellow hair upon her head. The sheen of the lamp lay faintly upon the profile of Helga. All else, saving the picture, was in darkness, and the girl looked like a vision upon the blackness past her, as she knelt with the portrait extended before her father's face.

He addressed her in weak and broken tones in Danish, then turned his head and slightly raised his arm, as though he wished to point to something up in the sky, but was without the power of limb to do so. On this Helga withdrew the portrait, and I put down the lamp, first searching the dark line of ocean, now scintellint with stars, before sitting again.

As the moon sunk, spite of her diffusing little or no light, a deeper dye seemed to come into the night. The shooting stars were plentiful, and betokened, as I might hope, continuance of fair weather. Here and there hovered a steam-colored fragment of cloud. An aspect of almost summer serenity was upon the countenance of the sky, and, though there was the weight of the ocean in the swing of the swell, there was peace too in the regularity of its run and in the soundless motion of it as it took us, sloping the raft after the manner of a see-saw.

In a boat, aboard any other contrivance than this raft put together by inexpert hands, I must have felt grateful, deeply thankful to God indeed, for this sweet quietude of air and sea that followed the roaring conflict of the long hours now passed. But I was without hope, and there can be no thankfulness without that emotion. These were the closing days of October; November was at hand; within an hour this sluggish breathing

of air might be storming up into such another hurricane as we were fresh from. And what then? Why, it was impossible to fancy such a thing even, without one's spirits growing heavy as lead, without feeling the presence of death in the chill of the night air.

No, for this passage of calm, God forgive me! I could not feel grateful. The coward in me rose strong. I could not bless Heaven for what affected me as a brief pause before a dreadful end that this very quiet of the night was only to render more lingering and fuller, therefore, of suffering.

Captain Nielsen began to mutter. I did not need to listen to him for above a minute to gather that he was delirious. I could see the outline of Helga against the stars, bending over the cot. The thought of this heroic girl's distress, of her complicated anguish, rallied me, and I broke in a very passion of self-reproach from the degradation of my dejection. I drew to the cot, and Helga said:

"He is wandering in his mind." She added with a note of wailing in her voice, "*Jeg er nu alene! Jeg er nu alene!*" by which she signified that she was now alone. I caught the meaning of the sentence from her pronunciation of it, and cried:

"Do not say you are alone, Helga! Besides, your father still lives—hark! what does he say?"

So far he had been babbling in Danish: now he spoke in English, in a strange voice that sounded as though proceeding from some one at a distance.

"It is so, you see. The storks did not return last spring. There was to be trouble—there was to be trouble! Ha! here is Pastor Madsen. Else, my beloved Else! here is the good Pastor Madsen. And there, too, is Rector Grönlund. Will he observe us? Else, he is deep in his book. Look!" he cried a little shrilly, pointing with a vehemence that startled me into following the indication of his shadowy glimmering hand directed into the darkness over the sea. "It is Kolding Latin School—nay, it is Rector Grönlund's parsonage garden. Ah, rector, you remember me? This is the little Else that your good wife thought the prettiest child in Denmark. And this is Pastor Madsen."

He paused, then muttered in Danish, and fell silent.

CHAPTER IX.

RESCUED.

THIS is a thing easy to recall, but how am I to convey the reality of it? What is there in ink to put before you that wide

scene of starlit gloom. the dusky shapes of swell forever running noiselessly at us—no sounds saving the occasional creaking of the raft as she was swayed—the motionless, black outlines of Helga and myself overhanging the pallid streak of cot—at intervals, a low sob breaking from the girl's heart, and the overwhelming sense of present danger, of hopelessness, made blacker yet by the night? And amid all this the crazy babbling of the dying Dane, now in English and now in his native tongue!

It was just upon the stroke of one o'clock in the morning when he died. I had brought my watch to the lamp, when he fetched a sort of groaning breath, of a character that caused me to bend my ear to his lips; and I found that he had ceased to breathe. I continued to listen, and then, to make sure, cast the light of the lamp upon him.

"He has gone!" cried Helga.

"God has taken him," said I. "Come to this side, and sit by me!"

She did as I asked, and I took her hand. I knew by her respiration that she was weeping, and I held my peace till her grief should have had some vent. I then spoke of her father, represented that his ailments must in all probability have carried him off almost as swiftly ashore; that he had died a peaceful death, with his daughter beside him, and his wife and home present in a vision to his gaze; and said that, so far from grieving, we should count it a mercy that he had been called away thus easily, for who was to imagine what lay before us—what sufferings, which must have killed him certainly later on?

"His heart broke when his bark sunk," said she. "I heard it in his cry."

This might very well have been, too.

Never was there so long a night. The moon was behind the sea, and after she was gone the very march of the stars seemed arrested, as though nature had cried "Halt!" to the universe. Having run the lamp aloft, I resolved to leave it there, possessed now with such a superstitious notion as might well influence a shipwrecked man, that if I lowered it again no vessel would appear. Therefore, to tell the time, I was obliged to strike a match, and whenever I did this I would stare at my watch and put it to my ear and doubt the evidence of my sight, so inexpressibly slow was the passage of those hours.

Helga's sobs ceased. She sat by my side, speaking seldom after we had exhausted our first talk on her coming round to where I was. I wished her to sleep, and told her that I could

easily make a couch for her, and that my oilskin would protect her from the dew. I still held her hand as I said this, and I felt the shudder that ran through her when she replied that she could not lie down, that she could not sleep. Perhaps she feared I would disturb her father's body to make a bed for her; and, indeed, there was nothing else on the raft, saving the poor fellow's cloak and his pillows and blankets, out of which I could have manufactured a bed.

Had I been sure that he was dead, I should have slipped the body overboard while it remained dark, so that Helga should not have been able to see what I did; but I had not the courage to bury him merely because I believed he was dead, because he lay there motionless; and I was constantly thinking how I should manage when the dawn came—how I was so to deal with the body as to shock and pain poor Helga as little as possible.

As we sat side by side, I felt a small pressure of her shoulder against my arm, and supposed that she had fallen asleep, but, on my whispering, she immediately answered. Dead tired I knew the brave girl must be, but sleep could not visit eyes whose gaze I might readily guess was again and again directed at the faint pale figure of the cot.

The light air shifted into the north-west at about three o'clock in the morning, and blew a small breeze which extinguished the star-flakes that here and there rode upon the swell, and raised a noise of tinkling, rippling waters along the sides of the raft. I guessed this new direction of the wind by my observation of a bright greenish star which had hung in the wake of the moon, and was now low in the west. This light breeze kindled a little hope in me, and I would rise again and again to peer into the quarter whence it blew in the expectation of spying some pale shadow of ship. Once Helga, giving a start, exclaimed:

"Hush! I seem to hear the throb of a steamer's engines!"

We both stood up hand in hand, for the sway of the raft made a danger of it as a platform, and I listened with strained hearing. It might have been a steamer, but there was no blotch of darkness upon the obscurity of the sea-line round to denote her, nor any gleam of lantern. Yet for nearly a quarter of an hour did we listen, in a torment of attention, and then resumed our seats side by side.

The dawn broke at last, dispelling, as it seemed to my weary, despairing imagination, a long mouth of perpetual night. The cold gray was slow and stealthy, and was a tedious time in brightening into the silver and rose of sunrise. My first act

was to sweep the sea for a ship, and I then went to the cot and looked at the face upon the pillows in it. If I had never seen death before, I might have known it now. I turned to the girl.

"Helga," said I, gently, "you can guess what my duty is —for your sake, and for mine, and for his too."

I looked earnestly at her as I spoke: she was deathly pale, haggard, her eyes red and inflamed with weeping, and her expression one of exquisite touching sorrow and mourning. But the sweetness of her young countenance was dominant even in that supreme time, and, blending with the visible signs of misery in her looks, raised the mere prettiness of her features into a sad beauty that impressed me as a spiritual rather than as a physical revelation.

"Yes, I know what must be done," she answered. "Let me kiss him first."

She approached the cot, knelt by it, and put her lips to her father's. Then raising her clasped hands above her head, and looking upward, she cried out—"*Jeg er faderlös! Gud hjelpe mig!*"

I stood apart waiting, scarcely able to draw my breath for the pity and sorrow that tightened my throat. It is impossible to imagine the plaintive wailing note her voice had as she uttered those Danish words—"I am fatherless! God help me!" She then hid her face in her hands, and remained kneeling and praying.

After a few minutes she arose, kissed again the white face, and seated herself with her back to the cot.

No one could have named to me a more painful, a more distasteful piece of work than the having to handle the body of this poor Danish captain, and launch him into that fathomless grave upon whose surface we lay. First I had to remove the ropes which formed our little bulwark, that I might slide the cot overboard; then with some ends of line I laced the figure in the cot, that it should not float away out of it when launched. The work kept me close to the body, and, thin and white as he was, yet he looked so life-like, wore an expression so remonstrant, that my horror was sensibly tinctured with a feeling of guilt as though instead of burying him I was about to drown him.

I made all dispatch possible for Helga's sake, but came to a pause, when the cot was ready, to look about me for a sinker. There was nothing that I could see but the jars, and, as they contained our little stock of spirits and fresh water, they were altogether too precious to send to the bottom. I could do no

more than hope that the canvas would speedily grow saturated, then fill and sink; and, putting my hands to the cot, I dragged it to the edge of the raft, and went round to the head and pushed.

It was midway over the side, when a huge black rat sprung from under the blankets out through the lacing, and disappeared under the hatch-cover. I had no doubt it was the same rat that had leaped from my shoulder aboard the bark. If it had terrified me then, you will guess the shock it caused me now! I uttered some cry in the momentary consternation raised in me by this beastly apparition of life flashing, so to speak, out of the very figure and stirlessness of death, and Helga looked and called to know what was the matter.

"Nothing, nothing," I replied. "Turn your eyes from me, Helga!"

She immediately resumed her former posture, covering her face with her hands. The next moment I had thrust the cot fair into the sea, and it slid off to a distance of twice or thrice its own length, and lay rising and falling, to all appearances buoyant as the raft itself. I knew it would sink so soon as the canvas and blankets were soaked, yet that might take a little while in doing, and dreading lest Helga should look—for you will readily conceive how dreadful would be to the girl that sight of her father afloat in the square of canvas, his face showing clearly through the lacing of rope—I went to her, and put my arm round her, and so, but without speaking, obliged her to keep her face away. I gathered from her passiveness that she understood me. When I glanced again, the cot was in the act of sinking; in a few beats of the heart it vanished, and all was blank ocean to the heavens—a prospect of little flashful and feathering ripples, but glorious as molten and sparkling silver in the east under the soaring sun.

I withdrew my hand from Helga's shoulder. She then looked, and sighed heavily, but no more tears flowed. I believe she had wept her heart dry!

"In what words am I to thank you for your kindness and sympathy?" said she. "My father and my mother are looking down upon us, and they will bless you."

"We must count on being saved, Helga," said I, forcing a cheerful note into my voice. "You will see Kolding again, and I shall hope to see it too, by your side." And with the idea of diverting her mind from her grief, I told her of my promise to her father, and how happy it would make me to accompany her to Denmark.

"I have been too much of a home-bird," said I. "You

will provide me with a good excuse for a ramble, Helga; but first you shall meet my dear old mother, and spend some time with us. I am to save your life, you know. I am here for that purpose;" and so I continued to talk to her, now and again coaxing a light sorrowful smile to her lips; but it was easy to know where her heart was; all the while she was sending glances at the sea close to the raft, where she might guess the cot had sunk, and twice I overheard her whisper to herself that same passionate, grieving sentences she had uttered when she kissed her father's dead face: "*Jeg er faderlös! Gud hjelpe mig!*"

The morning stole away. Very soon after I had buried the captain I lowered the lamp, and sent the Danish flag we had brought with us to the head of the little mast, where it blew out bravely, and promised to boldly court any passing eye that might be too distant to catch a sight of our flat platform of a raft. I then got breakfast, and induced Helga to eat and drink. Somehow, whether it was because of the sick complaining captain, with his depressing menace of death, being gone, or because of the glad sunshine, the high marbling of the heavens, full of fine weather, and the quiet of the sea, with its placid heave of swell and its twinkling of prismatic ripples, my heart felt somewhat light, my burden of despondency was easier to carry, was less crushing to my spirits. What to hope for I did not know. I needed no special wisdom to guess that if we were not speedily delivered from this raft we were as certainly doomed as though we had clung to the bark and gone down in her. Yet spite of this there was a stirring of hope in me. It seemed impossible but that some ship must pass before the day was gone. How far we had blown to the southward and westward during the gale I could not have told, but I might be sure we were not very distant from the mouth of the English Channel, and therefore in the fair way of vessels inward and outward bound, more particularly of steamers heading for Portuguese and Mediterranean ports.

But hour after hour passed, and nothing hove into view. The sun went floating from his meridian into the west, and still the horizon remained a blank, near, heaving line with the sky whitening to the ocean rim. Again and again Helga sought the boundary as I did. Side by side we would stand, she holding by my arm, and together we gazed, slowly sweeping the deep.

"It is strange!" she once said, after a long and thirsty look. "We are not in the middle of the ocean. Not even the smoke of a steamer."

"Our horizon is narrow," answered I. "Does it exceed three miles? I should say not, save when the swell lifts us, and then, perhaps, we may see four. Four miles of sea!" I cried. "There may be a dozen ships within three leagues of us, all of them easily within sight from the maintop of the 'Anine' were she afloat. But what short of a straight course for the raft could bring this speck of timber on which we stand into view? This is the sort of situation to make one understand what is signified by the immensity of the ocean."

She shivered and clasped her hands.

"That I—that we"—she exclaimed, speaking slowly and almost under her breath—"should have brought you to this pass, Mr. Tregarthen! It was our fate by rights—but it ought not to be yours!"

"You asked me to call you Helga," said I; "and you must give me my Christian name."

"What is it?" she asked.

"Hugh."

"It is a pretty name. If we are spared, it will be sweet to my memory while I have life!"

She said this with an exquisite artlessness, with an expression of wonderful sweetness and gentleness in her eyes which were bravely fastened upon me, and then, suddenly catching up my hand, put her lips to it and pressed it to her heart, letting it fall as she turned her face upon the water on that side of the raft where her father's body had sunk.

My spirits, which remained tolerably buoyant while the sun stood high, sunk as he declined. The prospect of another long night upon the raft and of all that might happen in a night was insupportable. I had securely bound the planks together, as I believed, but the constant play of the swell was sure to tell after a time. One of the ligatures might chafe through, and in a minute the whole fabric scatter under our feet like the staves of a stove boat, and leave us no more than a plank to hold on by in the midst of this great sea, which all day long had been without ships. I often bitterly deplored I had not brought a sail from the bark, for the air that hung steady all day blew landward, and there was no weight in it to have carried away the flimsiest fabric we could have erected. A sail would have given us a drift—perhaps have put us in the way of sighting a vessel, and in any case it would have mitigated the intolerable sense of helpless imprisonment which came to one with thoughts of the raft floating without an inch of way upon her, overhanging all day long, as it might

have seemed, that very spot of waters in which Helga's father had found his grave.

Shortly before sundown Helga sighted a sail in the south-west. It was the merest shaft of pearl gleaming above the ocean rim, and visible to us only when the quiet heave of the sea threw us up. It was no more than a vessel's topmost canvas, and before the sun was gone the dim star-like sheen of those cloths had faded out into the atmosphere.

"You must get some rest to-night, Helga," said I. "Your keeping awake will not save us if we are to be drowned, and if we are to be saved then sleep will keep you in strength. It is the after consequences of this sort of exposure and mental distress which are to be dreaded."

"Shall I be able to sleep on this little rickety platform?" she exclaimed, running her eyes, glowing dark against the faint scarlet in the west, over the raft. "It brings one so dreadfully near to the surface of the sea. The coldness of the very grave itself seems to come out of it."

"You talk like a girl now that your are dressed as one, Helga. The hearty young sailor lad that I met aboard the 'Anine' would have found nothing more than a raft and salt water in this business, and would have 'planked' it here as comfortably as in his cabin bunk."

"It did not please you to see me in boy's clothes," said she.

"You made a very charming boy, Helga; but I like you best as you are."

"No stranger should have seen me dressed so," she exclaimed, in a tone of voice that made me figure a little flush in her cheeks, though there was nothing to be seen in that way by the twilight which had drawn around us. "I did not care what the mates and the crew thought, but I could not have guessed—" she stammered, and went on—"when I saw in the bay what the weather was likely to prove, I determined to keep my boy's dress on, more particularly after that wretched man, Damm, went away with the others, for then the 'Anine' would be very short-handed for what might happen, and how could I have been of use in this attire?" and she took hold of her dress and looked down it.

"I have heard before," said I, "of girls doing sailor's work, but not for love of it. In the old songs and stories they are represented as going to sea chiefly in pursuit of absconding sweethearts."

"You think me unwomanly for acting the part of a sailor?" said she.

"I think of you, Helga," said I, taking her by the hand, "as a girl with the heart of a lioness. But if I once contrive to land you safely at Kolding, you will not go to sea again, I hope?"

She sighed, without replying.

There was nothing but her father's cloak and my oilskins to make a couch for her with. When I pressed her to take some rest, she entreated softly that I would allow her to go on talking and sitting—that she was sleepless—that it lightened her heart to talk with me—that there were many hours of darkness yet before us—and that before she consented to lie down we must arrange to keep watch, since I needed rest too.

I was willing, indeed, to keep her at my side talking. The dread of the loneliness which I knew would come off the wide, dark sea into my brain when she was silent and asleep, and when there would be nothing but the stars and the cold and ghastly gleam of the ebony breast on which we lay to look at, was strong upon me. I mastheaded the bull's-eye lamp, and spread the poor Danish captain's cloak, and we seated ourselves upon it, and for a long two hours we talked together, in which time she gave me her life's history, and I chatted to her about myself. I listened to her with interest and admiration. Her voice was pure with a quality of plaintive sweetness in it, and now and again she would utter a sentence in Danish, then translate it. It might be that the girlish nature I now found in her was accentuated to my appreciation by the memory of her boyish attire, by her appearance when on board the bark, the work she did there and the sort of roughness one associates with the trade of the sea, whether true of the individual or not; but, as I thought, never had I been in the company of any woman whose conversation and behavior were so engaging, with their qualities of delicacy, purity, simplicity, and candor, as Helga's.

It was such another night as had passed, saving that the long ocean swell had the softness of the long hours of fine weather in its volume, whereas on the previous night it still breathed as in memory of the fierce conflict that was over.

A little after midnight there was a red scar of moon in the west, and the hour was a very dark one, spite of the silver showering of the plentiful stars. I had made for Helga the best sort of couch it was in my power to manufacture, and at this time she lay upon it sleeping deeply, as I knew by the regularity of her respiration. The sense of loneliness I dreaded had been upon me since she lay down and left me to

the solitary contemplation of our situation. A small wind blew out of the north-west, and there was much slopping noise of waters under my feet amid the crevices of the clumsily framed raft. I had promised Helga to call her at three, but without intending to keep my word if she slept, and I sat near her head, her pale face glimmering out of the darkness as though spectrally self-luminous, and forever I was turning my eyes about the sea and directing my gaze at the little masthead lantern to know that it was burning.

Happening to bend my gaze down upon the raft into some interstice close against where the hatch-cover was secured, I spied what, for the moment, I might have supposed a pair of glow-worms, minute, but defined enough. Then I believed there was a little pool of water there, and that it reflected a couple of stars. A moment after I guessed what it was, and in a very frenzy of the superstition that had been stirring in me, and in many directions of thought influencing me, from the moment of my leaving the bark, I had my hand upon the great rat—for that was what it was—and sent it flying overboard. I remember the wild squeak of the beast as I hurled it—you would have supposed it the cry of a distant gull. There was a little fire in the water, and I could see where it swam, and all very quietly I seized hold of a loose plank and, waiting till it had come near, I hit it, and kept on hitting it, till I might be sure it was drowned.

Some little noise I may have made: Helga spoke in her sleep, but did not wake. You will smile at my mentioning this trifling passage: you would laugh could I make you understand the emotion of relief, the sense of exultant happiness that possessed me when I had drowned this rat. When I look back and recall this little detail of my experiences, I never doubt that the overwhelming spirit of the loneliness of that ocean night lay upon me in a sort of craziness. I thought of the rat as an evil spirit, a something horribly ominous to us, a menace of suffering and of dreadful death while it stayed with us. God knows why I should have thus thought; but the imagination of the shipwrecked is quickly diseased, and the moods which a man will afterward look back upon with shame and grief and astonishment are, while they are present, to him as fruitful of terrible imaginings as ever made the walls of a mad-house ring with maniac laughter.

It might have been some half hour after this—the silly excitement of the incident having passed out of my mind—that I fell into a doze. Nature was well-nigh exhausted in me, yet I did not wish to sleep. In proportion, however, as the

workings of my brain were stealthily quieted by the slumberous feelings stealing over me, so the soothing influences without operated; the cradling of the raft, the hushing and subduing gaze of the stars, the soft whispering of the wind.

I was awakened by a rude shock, followed by a hoarse bawling cry. There was a second shock of a sort to smartly bring my wits together, attended with several shouts, such as "What is it?" "What have ye run us into?" "Why, stroike me silly, it it ain't a raft!"

I sprung to my feet, and found the bows of a little vessel overhanging us. Small as I might know her to be, she yet loomed tall and black, and even seemed to tower over us, so low-seated were we. She lined her proportions against the starry sky, and I made out that she had hooked herself to us by running her bowsprit through the stays which supported our mast.

My first thought was for Helga, but she was rising even as I looked, and the next moment was at my side.

"For God's sake," I cried, "lower away your sail, or your stem will grind this raft to pieces! We are two—a girl and a man—shipwrecked people. I implore you to help us get on board you!"

A lantern was held over the side, and the face of the man who held it showed out to the touch of the luster like a picture in a camera obscura. The rays of the lantern streamed fairly upon us, and the man roared out:

"Ay! it's a raft, Jacob, and there are two of 'em, and one a gal. Chuck the man a rope's-end and he'll haul the raft alongside."

"Look out!" shouted another voice, from the after part of the little vessel, and some coils of rope fell at my feet.

I instantly seized the line, and, Helga catching hold too, we strained our united weight at it, and the raft swung alongside the craft at the moment that she lowered her sail.

"Catch hold of the lady's hands!" I shouted.

In a moment she was dragged over the side. I handed up the little parcel containing her mother's picture and Bible, and followed easily, scrambling over the low rail.

The man who gasped the lantern held it aloft to survey us, and I saw the dusky glimmer of two other faces past him.

"This is a queer start!" said he. "How long have you been knocking about here?"

"You shall have the yarn presently," said I; "but, before the raft goes adrift, it's well you should know that she is

pretty handsomely stocked with provisions all worth bringing aboard."

"Right!" he cried. "Jacob, take this here lantern and jump over the side, and hand up what ye find."

All this had happened too suddenly to suffer me as yet to be sensible of what came little short of a miraculous deliverance; for had the craft been a vessel of burden, or had there been any weight in the soft night air still blowing, she would have sheared through us as we lay asleep, and scattered the raft and drowned us out of hand—nay, before we could have cried "Oh, God!" we should have been suffocating in the water.

I believed her at first a fishing-boat. She was lugger-rigged and open, with a little forecastle in her bows, as I had noticed while the lantern dangled in the hand of the man who surveyed us. Yet had she been a line of battle ship she could not, as a refuge and means of deliverance after the horror and peril of that flat platform of raft, have filled me with more joy and thanksgiving.

"The worst is over, Helga!" I cried, as I seized the girl's cold and trembling hand. "Here is a brave little vessel to carry us home, and you will see Kolding again, after all!"

She made some answer, which her emotion rendered scarcely intelligible. Her being suddenly awakened by the shock of the collision, her alarm on seeing what might have passed in the gloom as a tall black mass of bow crushing into the raft, then the swiftness of our entry into the lugger, and the sensations which would follow on her perception of our escape from a terrible death—all this, combined with what she had gone through, was too much for the brave little creature; she could scarcely whisper; and, as I have said, her hand was cold as frost, and trembled like an aged person's as I gently brought her to one of the thwarts.

By this time I had made out that the boat carried only three of a crew. One of them, holding the lantern, had sprung on to the raft, and was busy in handing up to the others whatever he could lay his hands upon. They did not spend many minutes over this business. Indeed, I was astonished by their dispatch. The fellow on the raft worked like one who was very used to rummaging, and, as I knew afterward by observing what he had taken, it was certain not a single crevice escaped him.

"That's all," I heard him shout. "There's naught left that I can find, unless so be as the parties have snugged any valuables away."

"No!" I cried, "there are no valuables, no money—nothing but food and drink."

"Come aboard, Jacob, arter ye've chucked up what's loose for fire-wood."

Presently the lantern flashed as it was passed across the rail, and the figure of the man followed.

"Shove her clear!" was bawled, and shortly afterward, "Up foresail!"

The dark square of sail mounted, and one of the men came aft to the helm. Nothing was said until the sheet had been hauled aft, and the little craft was softly rippling along over the smooth folds of the swell, communicating a sensation so buoyant, so vital after the flat, mechanical swaying and slanting of the inert raft, that the mere feeling of it to me was as potent in virtue as some life-giving dram.

The other two men came out of the bows and seated themselves, placing the lighted lantern in the midst of us, and so we sat staring at one another.

"Men," said I, "you have rescued us from a horrible situation. I thank you for my life, and I thank you for this lady's life."

"How long have ye been washing about, sir?" said the man at the helm.

"Since Monday night," said I.

"A bad job!" said he; "but you'll have had it foine since Monday night. Any one perish aboard your raft?"

"One," I answered, quickly. "And now I'll tell you my story. But first, I must ask for a drop of spirits out of one of those jars you've transshipped. A sudden change of this sort tries a man to the soul."

"Ay, you're right," growled one of the others. "I know what it is to be plucked by the hair o' the head out of the hopen jaws of death, and the sort of feelings what comes arter the plucking job's o'er. Which'll be the particler jar, sir?"

"Any one of them," said I.

He explored with the lantern, found a little jar of brandy, and the glass, or rather I should say the pannikin, went round. I coaxed Helga into taking a sup; yet she continued silent at my side, as one still dazed and incapable of mastering what had happened. Indeed, with her woman's apparel, you might have believed that she had reequipped herself with her woman's nature.

CHAPTER X.

THE "EARLY MORN."

I TOLD my story, and the three fellows listened attentively. Their eyes glowed in the lamp-light as they stared at me. The weak wind raised a pleasant buzzing noise at the cutwater, and the lugger stole in floating launches through the gloom over the long invisible heave of the Atlantic swell.

"Ah!" said the helmsman, when I had made an end, "we heerd of that there Tintrenale life-boat job when we was at Penzance. An' so you was her cockswain?"

"Were the people of the boat drowned?" cried I, eagerly. "Can you give me any news of them?"

"No, sir," he answered; "there was no particulars to hand when we sailed. All that we larnt was that a life-boat had been stove alongside a vessel in Tintrenale Bay; and little wonder, tew, says I to my mates when I heerd it. Never remember the like of such a night as that there."

"What was the name of the Dane again?" said one of the fellows seated opposite me, as he lighted a short clay pipe by the flame of a match that he dexterously shielded from the wind in his hand as though his fist were a lantern.

"The 'Anine,'" I answered.

"A bit of a black bark, warn't she?" he continued. "Capt'n with small eyes and a beard like a goat! Why, yes! it'll be that there bark, Tommy, that slipped two year ago. Pigsears Hall and Stickenup Adams and me had a nice little job along with her."

"You are quite right," said Helga, in a low voice; "I was on board the vessel at the time. The captain was my father."

"Oh, indeed, mum!" said the fellow who steered. "An' he's gone dead! Poor old gentleman!"

"What is this boat?" said I, desiring to cut this sort of sympathy short.

"The 'Airly Marn,'" answered the helmsman.

"The 'Early Morn!' And from what part of the coast, pray?"

"Why, ye might see, I think, sir, that she hails from Deal," he answered. "There's nothen resembling the likes of her coming from elsewhere that I knows of."

"And what are you doing down in this part of the ocean?"

"Why," said he, after spitting over the stern and passing his hand along his mouth, "we're a-going to Australey."

"Going wlfere?" I cried, believing I had not correctly heard him, while Helga started from her drooping posture and turned to look at me.

"To Sydney, New South Wales, which is in Australey," he exclaimed.

"In this small open boat?"

"This small open boat!" echoed one of the others. "The 'Airly Marn's' eighteen ton, and if she be'nt big enough and good enough to carry three men to Australey there's nothen afloat as is going to show her how to do it!"

By the light shed by the dimly burning lantern, where it stood in the bottom of the boat, I endeavored to gather from their faces whether they spoke seriously, or whether, indeed, they were under the influence of earlier drams of liquor than the dose they had swallowed from our jar.

"Are you in earnest, men?" said I.

"Airnest!" cried the man at the tiller, in a voice of astonishment, as though he wondered at my wonder. "Why, to be sure we are! What's wrong with us that we shouldn't be a-going to Australey?"

I glanced at the short length of dark fabric, and up at the black square of lugsail.

"What is taking you to Australia in a Deal lugger?" said I.

The man styled Abraham by his mates, answered: "We're a-carrying this here craft out on a job for the gent that's bought her. There was three of us an' a boy, but the boy took sick at Penzance, and we came away without him."

He paused. The man sitting next him continued in a deep voice:

"A gent as lives in Lunnon took this here 'Airly Marn' over for a debt. Well, when he got her he didn't know what to do with her. There was no good a-leaving her to pine away on the beach, so he tarns to and puts her up to auction. Well, there was ne'er a bid."

"Ne'er a bid!" echoed the man who was steering.

"Ne'er a bid, I says," continued the other, "and whoy? First of all, there ain't no money in Deal; and next, the days of these luggers is numbered. Well, this here gent was called upon by an Australian friend who, gitting to hear of the 'Airly Marn,' says he's a-willing to buy her for a sum. What that sum might be I'm not here for to know."

"Fifty pounds, I allow," said the man named Tommy. "Some says she was guv away. I've heerd speak of thirty pound. But fifty's what I call it."

"Call it fifty," exclaimed the fellow who steered,

"Well," continued the first speaker, whose voice was peculiarly harsh, "this here gent having purchased the 'Airly Marn,' comes down to Deal, and gives out that he wants some men to carry her to Sydney. The matter was turned over. How much would he give? Well, he'd give two hundred and fifty pound, and them as undertook the job might make what shares they chose of the money. I was for making six shares. Abraham there says no, fower's enough. Tommy says three an' a boy. That's seventy-five pound a man and twenty-five pound for the boy; but the boy being took sick, his share becomes our'n."

"And you think seventy-five pounds a piece pay enough for as risky an undertaking as was ever heard of?" cried I.

"Wish it were already airned," said Abraham. "Pay enough? Oy, and good monney, tew, in such times as these."

"How far are we from the English coast?" asked Helga.

The man called Jacob, after a little silence, answered: "Why, I dare say the Land's End 'll be about a hundred an' eighty mile off."

"It would not take long to return," she exclaimed. "Will you not land us?"

"What, on the English coast, mum?" he cried.

I saw him peering earnestly at us as though he would gather our condition by our attire.

"It's a long way back," continued he: "and supposing the wind," he added, looking up at the sky, "should head us?"

"If the gent would make it worth us men's while"—broke in Tommy.

"No! no!" exclaimed Abraham, "we don't want to make nothen out of a fellow-creature's distress. We've saved ye, and that's a good job. Next thing we've got to do is to put ye aboard the first homeward bound vessel we falls in with. I'm for keeping all on. Ships is plentiful hereabout, and ye'll not be kept waiting. But to up hellum for the English coast again—" I saw his head wag vehemently against the stars. "It's a long way to Australey, master, and ne'er a man of us touches a penny piece till we gits there."

I sat considering a little. My immediate impulse was to offer the fellows a reward to land us. Then I thought, no! They may ask too much, and, indeed, whatever they might expect must prove too much for me, to whom five pounds was a considerable sum, though, as I have told you, my mother's slender income was enough for us both. Besides, the money these men might ask would be far more fitly devoted to Helga,

who had lost all save what she stood in, who was without a friend in England except myself and mother, who had been left by her father without a farthing saving some pitiful sum of insurance money, which she would not get for many a long day, and who, brave heart! would, therefore, need my mother's purse to refurnish her wardrobe and embark her for her Danish home, if, indeed, there would now be a home for her at Kolding.

These considerations passed with the velocity of thought through my mind. On the other hand, we were no longer aboard a stationary raft, but in a nimble little lugger that every hour was carrying us into a new prospect of ocean; and we might be sure, therefore, of speedily falling in with a homeward-bound steamer that would convey us to England in a tenth of the time the lugger would occupy, very much more comfortably, too, and at the cost of a few shillings, so to speak. Then, again, I felt too grateful for our preservation, too glad and rejoiceful over our deliverance from the dreadful future that had just now lain before us to remonstrate with the men, to oppose their wishes to pursue their course, to utter a word, in short, that might make them suppose I did not consider our mere escape from the raft good fortune enough.

"Surely it would not take them very long," Helga whispered in my ear, "to sail this boat back to Penzance?"

I repeated, in a voice inaudible to the others, the reflections which had occurred to me.

"Why, see there now!" bawled one of the boatmen, pointing with a shadowy hand into the dusk over the lee quarter. "There's plenty of the likes to fall in with; only she's a-going the wrong way."

I peered, and spied the green side and white masthead lanterns of a steamer propelling along the water at about a quarter of a mile distant. I could faintly distinguish the loom of her black length, like a smear of ink upon the obscurity, and the line of her smoke against the stars, with now and again a little leap of furnace light at the funnel-mouth that, while it hung there, might have passed for the blood-red visage of the moon staring out of a stormy sky.

"See, Helga!" I cried; "there are many like her, as this man says. In a few hours, please God, we may be safe aboard such another!" And I sunk my voice to add: "We can not do better than wait. Our friends here will be glad to get rid of us. No fear of their detaining us a moment longer than can be helped."

"Yes, you are right," she answered; "but I wish to quickly return for your sake—for your mother's sake, Hugh."

Her soft utterance of my name fell pleasantly upon my ear. I felt for her hand and pressed it, and whispered: "A little patience, and we shall find ourselves at home again. All is well with us now."

The lights to leeward silently glided ahead, and turned black upon the bow. One of the boatmen yawned with the roar of an animal.

"Nothen to keep me out of my bunk now, I allow," said he. "No more rafts to run into, I hope."

"I should like to get this lady under shelter," said I.

"That's easily done!" exclaimed Abraham. "There's a nice little fore-peak, and a bunk in it at her service."

Helga hastily exclaimed that she had had rest enough. I perceived that the delicacy of our Deal friends did not go to the length of observing that while Helga occupied the fore-peak it must be hers, and hers only; but the discussion of that point was out of the question now; so she stayed where she was, the boatman that had yawned went forward, and in a few minutes his snoring came along in a sound like the grating of a boat's keel over the shingle of his native town.

These darkest hours of the night slowly passed. The breeze blew, the keen stem of the lugger ripped through the quiet heave of the ocean, and I waited for the dawn, never doubting that Helga and I would be out of the boat and aboard some homeward-bounder ere we should have counted another half-score hours. The homely chat of the two men, the queer 'longshore phrases, the rough sympathy they sought to convey by their speech, were delightful to listen to. Such had been my experiences that, though five days comprised them, it seemed as if I had been six months from home. The talk mainly concerned this daring, extraordinary voyage to Australia in what was truly no more than an open boat. The excitement of delight over our rescue was in a measure spent. I could think calmly, and attend with interest to other considerations than our preservation, our sufferings, and, in short, ourselves. And what could interest me more than this singular undertaking on the part of three boatmen?

I inquired what food they carried.

"Whoy," says Abraham, "we've got beef an' pork and ship's bread and other wittles arter that sort."

"Shall you touch any ports?"

"Oy, if the need arises, master."

"Need arises! You are bound to run short of food and water!"

"There's a-plenty of ships to fall in with at sea, master, to help us along."

"How long do you reckon on taking to make the run?"

"Fower or foive month," answered Abraham.

"Oy, an' perhaps six," said Jacob.

"Who is skipper?" said I.

"There aren't no degrees here," answered Abraham; "leastways, now that the boy's gone sick and's left behoind."

"But which of you is navigator, then?"

"Oy am," said Abraham—"that's to say, I've got a quadrant along with me, and know how to tell at noon what o'clock it is. That's what's tarmed hascertaining the latitude. As to what's called longitude, she's best left to the log-line."

"So she is," said Jacob.

"And you have no doubt of accurately striking the port of Sydney without troubling yourselves about your longitude?"

"Ne'er a doubt," said Abraham.

"Or if so be as a doubt should come up, then heave the log, says I," broke in Jacob.

Their manner of speaking warned me to conceal my amazement that under other conditions could not have been without merriment. They told me they had left Pezance on the morning of Monday, while it was still blowing heavily. "But we saw that the breeze," Abraham said, "was a-going to fail, and so there was no call to stop for the wedder;" yet they had hardly run the land out of sight when they sprung their mast in the jump of a very hollow sea. "There was no use trying to ratch back ag'in that sea and breeze," said Abraham; "so we stepped our spare mast and laid the wounded chap in his place; but if the wedder be as bad off the Cape as I've heerd talk of, I allow we'll be needing a rig-out o' spars if we're to reach Australey; and what'll have to be done 'll be to fall in with some wessel as 'll oblige us."

Considering they were seafaring men, this prodigious confidence in luck and chance was not less wonderful than the venture they were upon. But it was for me to question and listen, not to criticise.

"They will never reach Australia," Helga whispered.

"They are English seamen," said I, softly.

"No, Hugh—boatmen," says she, giving me my name as easily as though we had been brother and sister. "And what will they do without longitude?"

"Grope their way," I whispered, "after the manner of the

early mariners who achieved everything in the shape of seamanship and discovery in 'barkes,' as they called them, compared to which this lugger is as a thousand-ton ship to a Gravesend wherry."

The two boatmen were holding a small hoarse argument touching the superiority of certain galley-punts belonging to Deal when the dawn broke along the port-beam of the lugger. The sea turned an ashen green, and throbbed darkening to the gray wall of eastern sky, against which it washed in a line of inky blackness. I sprung on to a thwart to look ahead on either bow, and Helga stood up beside me; and, as upon the bark, and as upon the raft, so now we stood together sweeping the iron-gray sky and the dark line of horizon for any flaw that might denote a vessel. But the sea stretched bald to its recesses the compass round.

The heavens in the east brightened and the sea-line changed into a steely whiteness, but this delicate distant horizontal gleam of water before sunrise gave us sight of nothing.

"Anything to be seen, sir?" cried Abraham.

"Nothing," I answered, dismounting from the thwart.

"Well, there's all day afore ye," said Jacob, who had taken the helm.

Now that daylight was come my first look was at Helga, to see how she had borne the bitter time that was passed. Her eyelids were heavy, her cheeks of a death-like whiteness, her lips pale, and in the tender hollow under each eye lay a greenish hue, resembling the shadow a spring leaf might fling. It was clear that she had been secretly weeping from time to time during the dark hours. She smiled when our eyes met, and her face was instantly sweetened by the expression into the gentle prettiness I had first found in her.

I next took a survey of my new companions. The man styled Abraham was a sailorly looking fellow, corresponding but indifferently with one's imagination of the conventional 'longshoreman. He had sharp features, a keen, iron-gray, seawardly eye, and a bunch of reddish beard stood forth from his chin. He was dressed in pilot cloth, wore ear-rings, and his head was incased in a sugar-loafed felt hat built after the fashion of a theatrical bandit's.

Jacob, on the other hand, was the most faithful copy of a Deal boatman that could have been met afloat. His face was flat and broad, with a skin stained in places of a brick red. He had little, merry, but rather dim blue eyes, and suggested a man who would be able, without great effort of memory, to tell you how many public-houses there were in Deal, tak-

ing them all round. He had the whitest teeth I had ever seen in a sailor, and the glance of them through his lips seemed to fix an air of smiling upon his face. His attire consisted of a fur cap, forced so low down upon the head that it obliged his ears to stand out; a yellow oilskin jumper and a pair of stout fearnaught trousers, the ends of which were packed into half-wellington boots.

The third man, named Thomas or Tommy, still continued out of sight in the fore-peak. One will often see at a glance as much as might occupy some pages to even briefly describe. In a few turns of the eye I had taken in these two men and their little ship. The boat seemed to be a very fine specimen of the Deal lugger. Her fore-peak consisted of a forecastle, the deck of which was carried in the shape of a platform several feet abaft the bulkhead, which limited the sleeping compartment, and under this pent-house or break were stored the anchors, cables, and other gear belonging to the little vessel. In the middle of the boat, made fast by chains, was a stove, with a box under the "raft," as the forecastle-deck is called, in which were kept the cooking utensils. I noticed fresh water-casks stowed in the boat's bilge, and a harness-cask for the meat near the fore-peak. Right amidships lay a little fat punt, measuring about fourteen feet long, and along the sides of the thwarts were three sweeps or long oars, the fore-mast that had been "sprung," and a bare bowsprit. This equipment I took in with the swift eye of a man who was at heart a boatman.

A noble boat indeed for channel cruising, for the short ragged seas of our narrow waters. But for the voyage to Australia! I could only stare and wonder.

The big lugsail was doing its work handsomely; the breeze was out on the starboard quarter, a pleasant wind, but with a hardness in the face of the sky to windward, a rigidity of small compacted high-hanging cloud with breaks of blue between, showing of a wintery keenness when the sun soared, that promised a freshening wind before noon. Under the steadfast drag of her lug the light, bright-sided boat was buzzing through it merrily, with a spitting of foam off either bow, and a streak on either side of wool-white water creaming into her wake that streamed rising and falling far astern.

Had her head been pointing the other way with a promise of the dusky gray of the Cornish coast to loom presently upon the sea-line, I should have found something delightful in the free, floating airy motion of the lugger sweeping over the quiet hills of swells, her weather-side caressed by the heads of the little seas crisply running along with her in a sportive racing

way. But the desolation of the ocean lay as an oppression upon my spirits. I counted upon the day-break revealing several sail, and here and there the blue streak of a steamer's smoke, but there was nothing of the sort to be seen, while every hour of such nimble progress as the lugger was now making must, to a degree, diminish our chances of falling in with homeward-bound craft; that is to say, we were sure, sooner or later, to meet with a ship going to England; but the further south we went the longer would be the intervals between the showing of ships by reason of the navigation scattering as it opened out into the North Atlantic; and so, though I never doubted that we should be taken off the lugger and carried home, yet as I looked around this vacant sea I was depressed by the fear that some time might pass before this would happen, and my thoughts went to my mother—how she might be supposing me dead, and mourning over me as lost to her forever, and how, if I could quickly return to her, I should be able to end her heartache and perhaps preserve her life; for I was her only child, and that she would fret over me even to the breaking of her heart, I feared, despite her having sanctioned my going out to save life.

Yet when I looked at Helga and reflected upon what her sufferings had been and what her loss was, and noted the spirit that still shone nobly in her steadfast gaze and was expressed in the lines of her lips, I felt that I was acting my part as a man but poorly in suffering my spirits to droop. This time yesterday we were upon a raft from which the first rise of sea must have swept us. It was the hard stare of the north-westerly sky that caused me to think of this time yesterday, and with something of a shiver and a long deep breath of gratitude for the safety that had come to us with this little fabric buoyant under our feet. I broke away from my mood of dullness with a half smile at the two homely boatmen who sat staring at Helga and at me.

"The lady looks but porely," said Abraham, with his eyes fixed upon Helga, though he addressed me. "Some people has their allowance of grief served out all at once. I earnestly hope, lady, that life's a-going to luff up with you now, and lead ye on a course that won't take long to bring ye to the port of joyfulness."

He nodded at her emphatically with as much sympathy in his countenance as his weather-tanned flesh would suffer him to exhibit.

"We have had a hard time," she answered, gently.

"Much too hard for any girl to go through," said I. "Men,

you must know this lady to be a complete sailor. She can take the wheel; she can sound the well; she has a nerve of steel at a moment that would send a good many who consider themselves stout-hearted to their prayers. It is not the usage of the sea, Abraham, that makes her look poorly, as you say."

I noticed Jacob leaning forward with his hands upon his knees, staring at her. Suddenly he smacked his leg with the sound of a pistol-shot.

"Why, yes!" he cried; "now I'm sure of it. Wasn't you once a boy, mum?"

"What!" cried Abraham, turning indignantly upon him.

A faint blush entered Helga's face.

"What I mean is," continued Jacob, "when I last see ye you was dressed up as a boy!"

"Yes," said I—"yes. And what then?"

"Whoy, then," he cried, fetching his leg another violent slap; "Pigsears Hall owes me a gallon o' beer. When we was aboard the Dane," he continued, addressing Abraham and talking with 'longshore vehemence, "I cotched sight of a boy that I says to myself thinks I is as sartin surely a female as that the Gull lightship's painted red. I told Pigsears Hall to look. 'Gal in your eye!' says he. 'Bet ye a gallon of ale, Jacob, she's as much a boy as Barney Parson's Willie!' But he was too busy to argue, and we left the ship without thinking more about it. Now I'm reminded, and I'm right, and I calls ye to witness, Abraham, so that Pigsears mayn't haul off from his wager."

"To change the subject," I said, abruptly, "you men seem to have some queer names among you. Pigsears Hall! Could any parson be got to christen a man so?"

"'Tain't his right name," said Abraham. "It's along of his ears that he's got that title. There's Stickenup Adams; that's 'cause he holds his thin nose so high. Then there's Paper-collar Joe; that's 'cause he likes to be genteel about the neck. We've all got nicknames. But in a voyage to Australey we gives ourselves the tarms our mothers' knew us by."

"What is your name?" said I.

"Abraham Vise," said he.

"Wise?"

"I calls it Vise," said he, looking a little disconcerted; "it's wrote with a W."

"And your shipmates?"

"Him," he answered, indicating his comrade by jerking his chin at him, "is Jacob Minikin. Him that's forrard is Tommy Budd." He paused, with his eyes fixed upon Helga.

"Jacob," said he, addressing his mate, while he steadfastly regarded the girl, "I've been a-thinking, if so be as the gentleman and lady aren't going to be put aboard a homeward-bounder in a hurry, how's she to sleep. Tell ye what it is," said he, slowly, looking around at Jacob; "if to-night finds 'em aboard us we'll have to tarn out of the fore-peak. There's a good enough bed for the likes of us men under that there raft," said he, pointing to the wide recess that was roofed by the overhanging of the deck of the fore-peak. "The lady looks as if nothen short of a twenty-four hours' spell of sound sleep was going to do her good. But of course, as I was saying," and now he was addressing me, "you and her may be aboard another craft, homeward bound, before the night comes."

"I thank you, on behalf of the lady, for your proposal, Abraham," said I. "She wants rest, as you say; but privacy must naturally be a condition of her resting comfortably in your fore-peak. Six hours would suffice—"

"Oh! she can lie there all night," said Jacob.

At this moment the third man made his appearance. He rose thrusting through a little square hatch, and, with true 'longshore instincts, took a slow survey of the sea, with an occasional rub of his wrist along his eyes before coming aft. He glanced at Helga and me carelessly, as though we had long become familiar features of the lugger to his mind, and, giving Abraham a nod, exclaimed, with another look round the sea: "A nice little air o' wind out this marning."

This fellow was a middle-aged man, probably forty-five. His countenance was of a somewhat sour cast, his eyebrows thick and of an iron-gray, and his eyes, deep-seated under them, gazed forth between lids whose rims were so red that they put a fancy into one of their being slowly eaten away by fire as a spark bites into tinder. The sulky curl of mouth expressed the born marine grumbler. His head-gear was of fur, like Jacob's; but I observed that he was dressed in a long coat that had manifestly been cut for or worn by a parson. Under the flapping tails of this coat were exhibited a pair of very loose fearnaught trousers, terminating in a pair of large, gouty, square-toed shoes.

"What about breakfast?" said he. "Ain't it toime to loight the foire?"

"Why, yes," answered Abraham; "and I dessay," said he, looking at me, "ye won't be sorry to get a mouthful o' wittles."

The sour-faced man named Tommy went forward, and was presently busy in chopping up a piece of wood.

"There are some good rashers to be had out of those hams you took from the raft," said I; "you will find the canned meat pleasant eating too. While you are getting breakfast I'll explore your fore-peak, with your permission."

"Sartinly," answered Abraham.

"Come along, Helga," said I. And we went forward.

We dropped through the hatch, and found ourselves in a little gloomy interior, much too shallow to stand erect in. There were four bunks, so contrived as to serve as seats and lockers as well as beds. There were no mattresses, but in each bunk was a little pile of blankets.

"A noble sea-parlor, Helga!" said I, laughing.

"It is better than the raft," she answered.

"Ay, indeed! but for all that not so good as to render us unwilling to leave this little lugger. You will never be able to sleep in one of these holes?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, with a note of cheerfulness in her voice; "but I hope there may be no occasion. I shall not want to sleep till the night comes, and, before it comes, we may be in another ship journeying home—to your home, I mean," she added, with a sigh.

"And not more mine than yours, so long as it will please you to make it yours. And now," said I, "that we may be as comfortable as possible—where are our friends' toilet conveniences? Their wash-basin is, no doubt, the ocean over the side, and I suspect a little lump of grease, used at long intervals, serves them for the soap they need. But there is plenty of refreshment to be had out of a salt-water rinsing of the face. Stay you here, and I will hand you down what is to be found."

I regained the deck, and asked one of the men to draw me a bucket of salt-water. I then asked Abraham for a piece of sail-cloth to serve as a towel.

"Sail-cloth!" he cried. "I'll give ye the real thing," and sliding open a locker in the stern sheets, he extracted a couple of towels.

"Want any soap?" said he.

"Soap!" cried I. "Have you such a thing?"

"Why, what d'ye think we are?" called the sour-faced man Tommy, who was kneeling at the little stove and blowing into it to kindle some chips of wood. "How's a man to shave without soap?"

"Want a looking-glass?" said Abraham, handing me a lump of marine soap as he spoke.

"Thank you," said I, modestly.

"And here's a comb," said he, producing out of his trousers pocket a knife-shaped affair that he opened into a large brass comb. "Anything more?"

"What more have you?" said I.

"Nothin' save a razor," said he.

This I did not require. I carried the bucket and the little bundle of unexpected conveniences to the hatch, and called to Helga.

"Here am I rich in spoils," said I, softly. "These boatmen are complete dandies. Here is soap, here are towels, here is a looking-glass, and here is a comb," and having handed her these things I made my way aft again.

"We ha'n't asked your name yet, sir," said Abraham, who was at the tiller again, while the other two were busy at the stove getting the breakfast.

"Hugh Tregarthen," said I.

"Thank ye," said he; "and the lady?"

"Helga Nielsen."

He nodded approvingly, as though pleased with the sound of the name.

"She's a nice little gal, upon my word," said he; "too good to belong to any other country nor Britain. Them Danes gets hold of the English tongue wonderful fast. Take a Swede or a Dutchman; it's *yaw yaw* with them to the end of their time. But I've met Danes as ye wouldn't know from Deal men, so fust-class was their speech." He slowly carried his chin to his shoulder to take a view of the weather astern, and then, fastening his eyes with 'longshore leisureliness upon my face—and I now noticed for the first time that he slightly squinted—he said, "It's a good job that we fell in with 'ee, Mr. Tregarthen; for if so be as you two had kept all on washing about on that there raft till noon to-day—and I give ye till noon—ye'd be wanting no man's help nor prayers afterward. It's a-going to blow."

"Yes," said I, "there's wind enough in that sky there; in fact, it's freshening a bit already, isn't it?" For I now perceived the keener feathering and sharper play upon the waters, and the harder and broader racing of the yeast that was pouring away from either quarter of the lugger. "There's been a shift of the wind, too, I think," I added, trying to catch a sight of the dusky interior of a little compass-box that stood on the seat close against Abraham.

"Yes, it's drawed norradly," he answered. "I ain't sorry, for it's like justifying of me for not setting ye ashore. I did think, when the young lady asked me to steer for England, that I wasn't acting the part of a humane man in refusing of her, and for keeping all on stretching the distance between you and your home. But I reckoned upon the wind drawing ahead for a homeward-bound course, and now it has; so that if we was to keep you a week and get ye aboard a steamer at the end of it you'd stand to get home sooner than if we was to down hellum now and start a-ratching for your coast."

"We owe our lives to you," said I, cordially. "Not likely that we could wish to inconvenience you by causing your lugger to swerve by so much as a foot from her course."

CHAPTER XI.

HEADING SOUTH.

JUST then Helga rose through the hatch. I caught an expression of admiration in Abraham's face at her floating, graceful manner of passing through the little aperture.

"She might ha' been born and bred in a lugger," said he to me in a hoarse whisper. "Whoy, with the werry choicest and elegantest o' females it 'ud be no more'n an awkward scramble to squeeze through that hole. Has she wings to her feet? I didn't see her use her elbows, did you? And, my precious limbs! how easily she takes them thwarts!" by which he meant her manner of passing over the seats of the boat.

Perhaps now I could find heart to admire the girl's figure. Certainly I had had but small spirit for observation of that kind aboard the raft, and there only had her shape been revealed to me; for in the bark no hint was conveyed by her boyish attire of the charms it rudely and heavily concealed. The sparkling brine with which she had refreshed her face had put something of life into her pale cheeks, and there was a faint bloom in her complexion that was slightly deepened by a delicate glow as she smiled in response to my smile and took a seat at my side.

"Them rashers smell first-class," said Abraham, with a hungry snuffle. "It must be prime ham as'll steal to the nose, while cooking, dead in the vind's eye."

"Before breakfast is ready," said I, "I'll imitate Miss Nielsen's example," and with that I went forward, drew a bucket of water, dropped into the fore-peak, and enjoyed the most refreshing wash that I can call to mind. One needs to

be shipwrecked to appreciate these seeming trifles. For my own part, I could scarcely realize that, saving my oilskin coat, I had not removed a stitch of my clothes since I had run from my mother's house to the life-boat. I came into the light that streamed into the little hatch, and took a view of myself in the looking-glass, and was surprised to find how trifling were the marks I bore of the severe, I may truly say the desperate, experiences I had passed through. My eyes retained their brightness, my cheeks their color. I was bearded, and therefore able to emerge triumphantly from a prolonged passage of marine disaster without requiring to use a razor. It is the stubbled chin that completes the gauntness of the shipwrecked countenance.

I have a lively recollection of that breakfast—our first meal aboard the "Early Morn." Rashers of ham hissed in the frying-pan; each of us grasped a thick china mug full of black coffee; the bag of biscuits we had brought with us from the bark lay yawning at our feet, and every one helped himself. The boatmen chewed away solemnly, as though they were masticating quids of tobacco, each man falling to with a huge clasp-knife, that doubtless communicated a distinct flavor of tarred hemp to whatever the blade came in contact with. Indeed, they cut up their victuals as they might cut up tobacco; working at it with extended arms and backward-leaning posture, putting bits of the food together as though to fit their mouths, and then whipping the morsel on the tips of their knives through their leathery lips with a slow chaw, chaw of their under-jaws that made one think of a cow busy with the cud. Their leisurely behavior carried me in imagination to the English sea-side; for these were the sort of men who, swift as might be their movements in an hour of necessity, were the most loafing of loungers in times of idleness—men who could not stand upright, who polished the hardest granite by constant friction with their fearnaught trousers, but who were yet the fittest central objects imaginable for that prospect of golden sand, of calm blue sea, of marble-white pier and terraces of cliff lifting their summits of sloping green high into the sweet clear atmosphere, which one has in mind when one thinks of the holiday coast of the old home.

The man named Thomas having cooked the breakfast, had taken the helm, but the obligation of steering did not interfere with his eating. In fact, I observed that he steered with the small of his back, helping the helm now and again by a slight touch of the tiller with his elbow, while he fell to on the plate upon his knee. For my part, I was as hungry as a wolf,

and fed heartily, as the old voyagers would have said. Helga, too, did very well; indeed, her grief had half starved her, and mighty glad was I to see this fair and dainty little heart of oak making a meal, for it was a good assurance in its way that she was fighting with her sorrow and was beginning to look at the future without the bitter sadness that was in her gaze yesterday.

But while we sat eating and chatting, the wind continued to slowly freshen; the fore-sheet had tautened to the rigidity of iron, and now and again the lugger made a plunge that would send a bright mass of white water rolling away from either bow. The wind, however, was almost over the stern, and we bowled along before it on a level keel, save when some *scend* of sea, lifting her under the quarter, threw the little fabric along with a slanting mast and a sharper drum-like rolling out of the heart of the distended canvas as the lugger recovered herself with a saucy swing to starboard.

"Who says we ain't going to reach Australey?" exclaimed Abraham, pulling out a short pipe and filling it, with a slow satisfied grin at the yeasty dazzle over the lee rail to which the eye, fastened upon it, was stooped at times so close that the brain seemed to dance to the wild and brilliant gyrations of the milky race.

"A strange fancy," said I, "for a man to buy a Deal lugger for Sydney Bay."

"If it warn't for strange fancies," said Thomas, with a sour glance, "it 'ud be a poor lookout for the likes of such as me."

"Tell ye what I'm a-going to miss in this here ramble," exclaimed Jacob. "That's beer, mates."

"Beer 'll come the sweeter for the want of it," said Abraham, with a sympathetic face. "Still, I must say, when a man feels down there's nothin' like a point o' beer."

"What's drunk in your country, mum?" said Jacob.

"Everything that you drink in England," Helga answered.

"But I allow," grunted Thomas, fixing a morose eye upon the horizon, "that the Scandinavians, as the Danes and likevise the Swedes along with other nations, incloodin' of the Roosians, is called, be'nt so particular in the matter o' drink as the English, to say nothen o' Dealmen. Whoy," he added, with a voice of contempt, "they're often content to do without it. Capt'ns and owners know that. The Scandinavian fancies is so cheap that you may fill your fo'k'sle with twenty sailors on tarms that 'ud starve six Englishmen."

"The Danes are good sailors," said Helga, looking at him,

"and they are the better sailors because they are a sober people."

"I've got nothen to say agin 'em as sailors," retorted Thomas; "but they ships too cheap, mum—they ships too cheap."

"They will take what an Englishman will take!" exclaimed Helga, with a little sparkle in her eye.

"So they will, mum—so they will!" exclaimed Abraham, soothingly. "The Dane's a fust-class sailor and a temperate man, and when Tommy there'll give me an opportunity of saying as much for him I'll proclaim it."

I was standing up, peering round the sea for perhaps the tenth time that morning, when, happening to have my eyes directed astern, as the lugger ran in one of her graceful buoyant, soaring launches to the summit of a little surge—for the freshening of the wind had already set the water running in heaps, noticeable even now for weight and velocity aboard that open craft of eighteen tons, though from the height of a big ship the seas would have been no more than a pleasant wrinkling of the northerly swell—I say, happening to look astern at that moment, I caught sight of a flake of white poised star-like over the rim of the ocean. The lugger sunk, then rose again, and again I spied that bland, moon-like point of canvas.

"A sail!" said I, "but unhappily in chase of us. Always, in such times as these, whatever shows shows at the wrong end."

Abraham stood up to look, saw the object, and seated himself in silence.

"How are you heading the lugger?" cried I.

"Sou'-sou'-west," he answered.

"What course have you determined on?" said I, anxious to gather from the character of his navigation what might be our chances of falling in with the homeward-bounders.

"Why, keep on heading as we go," he answered, "till we strike the south-east trades, which are to be met with a-blowing at about two-and-twenty degrees no'the; then bring the 'Airly Marn' to about south. When the hequator's crossed," continued he, smoking, with his head well sunk between his coat collars, "we strikes off to the west'ard again for the hisland of Trinidad—not to soight it; but when we gits into its latitude we starboards for the south-east trades and goes away for the Cape o' Good Hope. Are ye anything of a navigator yourself?"

"No," I answered, which was true enough, though I was

not so wholly ignorant of the art of conducting a ship from one place to another as not to listen with the utmost degree of astonishment to this simple boatman's programme of the voyage to Australia.

He whipped open the same locker from which he had taken the rough toilet articles, and extracted a little blue-backed track-chart of the world, which he opened and laid across his knees.

"I suppose ye can read, sir?" said he, not at all designing to be offensive, as was readily gatherable from his countenance, merely putting the question, as I easily saw, out of his experience of the culture of Deal beach.

Helga laughed.

"Yes, I can read a little," said I.

"Well, then," said he, laying a twisted stump of thumb upon the chart, "here's the whole blooming woyage wrote down by Capt'n Israel Brown of the 'Turk's Head,' a wessel that was in the Downs when my mates and me agreed for to undertake this job. He took me into his cabin, and pulling out this here chart, he marked these lines as you see down upon it. 'There, Abraham!' he says, says he; 'you steer according to these here directions, and your lugger 'll hit Sydney Bay like threading a needle.'"

I looked at the chart, and discovered that the course marked upon it would carry the lugger to the westward of Madeira. It was not suggested by the indications that any port was to be touched at, or, indeed, any land to be made until Table Bay was reached. The two men, Jacob and Tommy, were eying me eagerly, as though thirsting for an argument. This determined me not to hazard any criticism. I merely said:

"I understood from you, I think, that you depend upon ships supplying you with your wants."

Abraham responded with an emphatic nod.

Well, thought I, I suppose the fellows know what they are about; but in the face of that chart I could not but feel mightily thankful that Helga and I stood a chance of being transshiped long before experience should have taught the men that charity was as little to be depended at upon sea as ashore. They talked of five months, and even of six, in making the run, and who was to question such a possibility when the distance, the size of the boat, the vast areas of furious tempest and of rotting calm which lay ahead were considered? The mere notion of the sense of profound tediousness, of sickening wearisomeness which must speedily come, sent a shudder through me when I looked at the open craft whose length

might have been measured by an active jumper in a couple of bounds, in which there was no space for walking, and for the matter of that not very much room for moving, what with the contiguity of the thwarts and the incumbrances of lockers, spare masts and oars, the pump, the stove, the little deck forward, the boat, and the rest of the furniture.

I asked Abraham how they managed in the matter of keeping a lookout.

"One tarns in for four hours, and t'other two keep the watch, one a-steering for two hours and the other relieving him arterwards."

"That gives you eight hours on deck and four hours sleep," said Helga.

"Quite right, mum."

"Eight hours of deck is too much," she cried; "there should have been four of you. Then it would have been watch and watch."

"Ay, and another share to bring down our'n," exclaimed Thomas.

"Mr. Abraham," said Helga, "Mr. Tregarthen has told you that I can steer. I promise you that while I am at the helm the lugger's course shall be as true as a hair, as you sailors say. I can also keep a lookout. Many and many a time have I kept watch on board my father's ship. While we are with you, you must let me make one of your crew."

"I, too, am reckoned a middling hand at the helm," said I; "so while we are here there will be five of us to do the lugger's work."

Abraham looked at the girl admiringly.

"You're a werry good lady," he said; "I dorn't doubt your willingness. On board a ship I shouldn't doubt your capacity; but the handling of these here luggers is a job as needs the eddication of years. Us Deal boatmen are born into the work, and them as ain't commonly perish when they tries their hand at it."

"'Sides, it's a long woyage," growled Thomas, "and if more shares is to be made of it I'm for going home."

"You're always a-thinking of the shares, Tommy," cried Abraham; "the gent and the lady means nothing but koindness. No, mum, thanking you all the same," continued he, giving Helga an ungainly but respectful sea bow. "You're shipwrecked passengers, and our duty is to put ye in the way of getting home. That's what you expect of us; and what we expect of you is that you'll make your minds easy and keep comfortable ontil ye leave us."

I thanked him warmly, and then stood up to take another look at the vessel that was overhauling us astern. She was rising fast, already dashing the sky past the blue ridges of the ocean with a broad gleam of canvas.

"Helga," said I, softly, "there is a large ship rapidly coming up astern. Shall we ask these men to put us aboard her?"

She fastened her pretty blue eyes thoughtfully upon me.

"She is not going home, Hugh."

"No, nor is the lugger. That ship should make us a more comfortable home than this little craft until we can get aboard another vessel."

She continued to eye me thoughtfully, and then said: "This lugger will give us a better chance of getting home quickly than that ship. These men will run down to a vessel or even chase one to oblige us and to get rid of us; but a ship like that," said she, looking astern, "is always in a hurry when the wind blows, and is rarely very willing to back her topsail. And then think what a swift ship she must be, to judge from her manner of overtaking us! The swifter, the worse for us, Hugh—I mean, the further you will be carried away from your home."

She met my eyes with a faint wistful smile upon her face, as though she feared I would think her forward.

"You are right, Helga," said I. "You are every inch a sailor. We will stick to the lugger."

Abraham went forward to lie down, after instructing Jacob to arouse him at a quarter before noon, that he might shoot the sun. Thomas sat with a sulky countenance at the helm, and Jacob overhung the rail close against the fore-sheet, his chin upon his hairy wrist, and his gaze leveled at the horizon after the mechanical fashion of the 'longshoreman afloat. At intervals the wind continued to freshen in small "guns," to use the expressive old term—in little blasts or shocks of squall, which flashed with a shriek into the concavity of the lug, leaving the wind steady again but stronger, with a higher tone in the moan of it above and a stormier boiling of the waters round about the lugger, that seemed to be swirling along as though a comet had got her in tow, though this sense of speed was no doubt sharpened by the closeness of the hissing white waters to the rail. Yet shortly after ten o'clock the ship astern had risen to her water-line and was picking us up as though, forsooth, we were riding to a sea-anchor.

A nobler ocean picture never delighted a landsman's vision. The snow-white spires of the oncoming ship swayed with solemn

and stately motions to the underrun of the quartering sea. She had studding-sails out to starboard, one mounting to another in a very pyramid of soft milky cloths, and her wings of jibs, almost becalmed, floated airily from masthead to bowsprit and jibboom end like symmetric fragments of fleecy cloud rent from the stately mass of fabric that soared behind them brilliant in the flashing sunshine. Each time our lugger was hove upward I would spy the dazzling smother of the foam, which the shearing cutwater of the clipper, driven by a power greater than steam, was piling to the hawse-pipes, even to the very burying of the forecastle-head to some of the majestic structure's courtesies.

Helga watched her with clasped hands and parted lips and glowing blue eyes full of spirit and delight. The glorious sea-piece seemed to suspend memory in her; all look of grief was gone out of her face, her very being appeared to have blended itself with that windy, flying, triumphant oceanic show, and her looks of elation, the abandonment of herself to the impulse and the spirit of what she viewed, assured me that if ever old Ocean owned a daughter its child was the pale, blue-eyed, yellow-haired maiden who sat with rapt gaze and swift respiration at my side.

Jacob, who had been eying the ship listlessly, suddenly started into an air of life and astonishment.

"Whoy, Tommy," cried he, grasping the rail and staring over the stern out of his hunched shoulders, "pisen me, mate, if she ain't the 'Thermoppilly!'"

Thomas slowly and sulkily turned his chin upon his shoulder, and, after a short stare, put his back again on the ship, and said: "Yes, that's the 'Thermoppilly' right enough!"

"The 'Thermopylæ?'" said I. "Do you mean the famous Aberdeen clipper?"

"Ay," cried Jacob, "that's her! Ain't she a beauty? My oye, what a run! What's a-going to touch her? Look at them mastheads! Tall enough to foul the stars, Tommy, and *de*-range the blooming solar system."

He beat his thigh in his enjoyment of the sight, and continued to deliver himself of a number of nautical observations expressive of his admiration and of the merits of the approaching vessel.

She had slightly shifted her helm, as I might take it, to have a look at us, and would pass us close. The thunder of the wind in her towering heights came along to our ears in the sweep of the air in a low continuous note of thunder. You could hear the boiling of the water bursting and pouring from

her bows; her copper gleamed to every starboard roll on the white peaks of the sea along her bends in dull flashes as of a stormy sunset, with a frequent star-like sparkling about her from brass or glass. How swiftly she was passing us I could not have imagined until she was on our quarter, and then abreast of us—so close that I could distinguish the face of a man standing aft looking at us, of the fellow at the wheel, of a man at the break of the short poop singing out orders in a voice whose every syllable rung clearly to our hearing. A crowd of seamen were engaged in getting in the lower studding-sail, and this great sail went melting out against the hard mottled-blue of the sky as the clipper stormed past.

Jacob sprung on to a thwart, and, in an ecstasy of greeting that made a very wind-mill of his arms, shrieked rather than roared out: "How d'ye do, sir—how d'ye do, sir? How are ye, sir? Glad to see ye, sir!"

The man that he addressed stared a moment, and hastily withdrew, and returned with a binocular glass, which he leveled at us for a moment, then flourished his hand.

"What are you doing down here, Jacob?" he bawled.

"Going to Australey!" shouted Jacob.

"Where?" roared the other.

"To Sydney, New South Wales!" shouted Jacob.

The man, who was probably the captain, put his finger against his nose and wagged his head; but further speech was no longer possible.

"He don't believe us!" roared Jacob to his mate, and forthwith fell to making twenty extravagant gestures toward the ship in notification of his sincerity.

The wonderful squareness of the ship's canvas stole out as she gave us her stern, with the foam of her wake rushing from under the counter like to the dazzling back-wash of a huge paddle-wheel, and she seemed to fill the south-west heaven with her cloths, so high and broad did those complicated pinions, soaring to the trucks, look to us from the low seat of the bounding and spluttering lugger.

"Lord now!" cried Jacob, "if she'd only give us the end of a tow-rope!"

"Yes," said I, gazing with admiration at the beautiful figure of the ship rapidly forging ahead, and already diminishing into an exquisite daintiness and delicacy of shape and tint, "you would not, in that case, have to talk of five or six months to Australia."

At a quarter before twelve she was the merest toy ahead, just a glance of mother-of-pearl upon the horizon; but by this

hour it was blowing a strong breeze of wind, and when Abraham came out of the fore-peak he called to Jacob, and between them they eased up the fore-halliards and hooked the sheet to the second staken—in other words, to a sort of cringle or loop, of which there were four. Then, having knotted the reef points, Abraham came aft to seek for the sun.

My humor was not a little pensive, for the sea that was now running was a verification of the boatman's words to me, and I could not keep my thoughts away from what must have happened to Helga and me had we not been mercifully taken off the raft. The lugger rose buoyantly to each flickering, seething head, but, spite of my life-boat experiences, I could not help watching with a certain anxiety the headlong rush of foam to her counter, nor could I feel the wild, ball-like toss the strong Atlantic surge would give to our egg-shell of a boat without misgiving as to the sort of weather she was likely to make should such another storm as had foundered the "Anine" come down upon the ocean. I was also vexed to the heart by the speed at which we were driving, and by the assurance, I was seafarer enough to understand, that in such a lump of a sea as was now running there would be a very small probability indeed of our being able to board, or even to get alongside of, a homeward-bounder though twenty vessels close-hauled for England should travel past us in an hour. How far were we to be transported into this great ocean before the luck of the sea should put us in the way of returning home? These were considerations to greatly subdue my spirits; and there was also the horror that memory brought when I glanced at the sweeping headlong waters and thought of the raft.

I looked at Helga; her eyes were slowly sweeping the horizon, and on their coming to mine the tender blue of them seemed to darken to a gentle smile. Whatever her heart might be thinking of, assuredly no trace of the misgivings which were worrying me were discernible in her. The shadow of the grief that had been upon her face during the morning had returned with the passing away of the life the noble picture of the ship had kindled in her; but there was nothing in it to weaken in her lineaments their characteristic expression of firmness and resolution and spirit. Her tremorless lips lay parted to the sweep of the wind; her admirable little figure yielded to the bounding, often violent, jerking motions of the lugger with the grace of a consummate horsewoman who is one with the brave, swift creature she rides; her short yellow hair trembled under the dark velvet-like skin of her turban-

shaped hat, as though each gust raised a showering of gold-dust about her neck and cheeks.

Yet I believe had I been under sentence of death I must have laughed outright at the spectacle of Abraham bobbing at the sun with an old-fashioned quadrant that might well have been in use for forty years. He stood up on straddled legs with the aged instrument at his eye, mopping and mowing at the luminary in the south, and biting hard in his puzzlement and efforts at a piece of tobacco that stood out in his cheeks like a knob.

"He's a blazing long time in making height bells, hain't he, to-day?" said Jacob, addressing Abraham, and referring to the sun.

"He's all right," answered Abraham, talking with his eye at the little telescope. "You leave him to me, mate; keep you quiet, and I'll be telling you what o'clock it is presently."

Helga turned her head to conceal her face, and, indeed, no countenance more comical than Abraham's could be imagined, what with the mastication of his jaws, which kept his ears and the muscles of his forehead moving, and what with the intensity of the screwed-up expression of his closed eye and the slow wagging of his beard, like the tail of a pigeon newly alighted.

"Height bells!" he suddenly roared in a voice of triumph, at the same time whipping out a huge silver watch, at which he stared for some moments, holding the watch out at arm's-length as though time was not to be very easily read. "Blowed if it be n't much more than eleven o'clock at Deal," he cried. "Only fancy being able to make or lose time as ye loike! Werry useful ashore, sir, that 'ud be, 'ticularly when you've got a bill a-falling doo."

He then seated himself in the stern sheets, and, producing a small book and a lead-pencil from the locker, went to work to calculate his latitude. It was a very rough, ready, and primitive sort of reckoning. He eyed the paper with a knowing face, often scratching the hair over his ear and looking up at the sky with counting lips; then, being satisfied, he administered a nod all round, took out his chart, and, having made a mark upon it, exclaimed, while he returned it to the locker: "There, that job's over till twelve o'clock to-morrow." This said, he extracted a log-book that already looked as though it had been twice round the world, together with a little penny bottle of ink and a pen, and, with the book open upon his knee, forthwith entered the latitude (as he made it) in the column ruled for that purpose; but I could not see that he made any

attempt even at guessing at his longitude, though I noticed that he wrote down the speed of his little craft, which he obtained —and I dare say as correctly as he had hove the log—by casting his eye over the side.

"How d'ye spell 'Thermoppilly?'" said he, addressing us generally.

I told him.

"Just want to state here that we sighted her, that's all," said he; "this here space with 'Observations' wrote atop has got to be filled up, I suppose! At about wan o'clock this marning," he exclaimed, speaking very slowly and writing as he spoke, "fell in with a raft—how's raft spelled, master? two r's?" I spelled the word for him. "Thank 'ee! Fell in with a raft, and took off a lady and gent. There, that'll be the noose for twenty-four hours! Now let's go to dinner."

This midday meal was composed of a piece of corned beef, some ship's biscuit, and cheese. I might have found a better appetite had there been less wind, and had the boat's head been pointed the other way. All the time now the lugger was swarming through it at the rate of steam. There was already a strong sea running too, the storminess of which we should have felt had we had it on the bow; but our arrowy speeding before it softened the fierceness of its sweeping hurls, and the wind for the same reason came with half the weight it really had, though we must have been reefed down to a mere strip of canvas had we been close-hauled. The sun shone with a dim and windy light out of the sky that was hard with a piebalding of cloud.

"What is the weather going to prove?" I asked Abraham.

He munched leisurely, with a slow look to windward, and answered: "'Tain't going to be worse nor ye see it."

"Have you a barometer?" said I.

"No," he answered; "they're no good. In a boat arter this here pattern what's the use of knowing what's a-going to come? It's only a-letting go a rope an' you're under bare poles. Marcury's all very well in a big ship, where ye may be taken aback clean out o' the sky, and lose every spar down to the stumps of the lower masts."

Though I constantly kept a look-out, sending my eyes roaming over either bow past the smooth and foaming curves of seas rushing ahead of us, I was very sensible, as I have said, that nothing was to be done in such hollow waters as we were now rushing through, though we should sight a score of homeward-bounders. Yet, spite of the wonderful life that strong northerly wind swept into the ocean, nothing whatever showed

during the rest of the day, if I except a single tip of canvas that hovered for about a quarter of an hour some two or three leagues down in the east like a little wreath of mountain mist. The incessant pouring of the wind past the ear, the shouting and whistling of it as it flashed spray-loaded off each foaming peak in chase of us, grew inexpressibly sickening and wearying to me, coming as it did after our long exposure to the fierce weather of the earlier days. The thwarts or lockers brought our heads above the line of the gunwale, and to remedy this I asked leave to drag a spare sail aft into the bottom of the boat, and there Helga and I sat, somewhat sheltered at least, and capable of conversing without being obliged to cry out.

CHAPTER XII.

A 'LONGSHORE QUARREL.

We passed the afternoon in this way. Jacob was forward, sleeping; Thomas's turn at the helm had come round again; and Abraham lay over the lee rail, within grasp of the fore-sheet, lost in contemplation of the rushing waters.

"Where and when is this experience of ours going to end?" said I to Helga as we sat chatting.

"How fast are we traveling?" she asked.

"Between eight and nine miles an hour," I answered.

"This has been our speed during the greater part of the day," she said. "Your home grows more and more distant, Hugh; but you will return to it."

"Oh, I fear for neither of us, Helga," said I. "Were it not for my mother, I should not be anxious. But it will soon be a week since I left her, and, if she should hear that I was blown away out of the bay in the 'Anine,' she will conclude that I perished in the vessel."

"We must pray that God will support her and give her strength to await your return," said she, speaking sadly, with her eyes bent down.

What more could she say? It was one of those passages in life in which one is made to feel that Providence is all in all, when the very instinct of human action in one is arrested, and when there comes upon the spirit a deep pause of waiting for God's will.

I looked at her earnestly as she sat by my side, and found myself dwelling with an almost lover-like pleasure upon the graces of her pale face, the delicacy of her lineaments, the refinement of prettiness that was heightened into something

of dignity, maidenly as it was, by the fortitude of spirit her countenance expressed.

"Helga," said I, "what will you do when you return to Kolding?"

"I shall have to think," she answered, with the scarcely perceptible accent of a passing tremor in her voice.

"You have no relatives, your father told me?"

"No; none. A few friends, but no relatives."

"But your father has a house at Kolding?"

"He rented a house, but it will be no home for me if I can not afford to maintain it. But let my future be my trouble, Hugh," said she, gently, looking at me, and always pronouncing my name as a sister might a brother's.

"Oh, no!" said I. "I am under a promise to your father—a promise that his death makes binding as a sacred oath upon me. Your future must be my business. If I carry you home in safety—I mean to my mother's home, Helga—I shall consider that I saved your life; and the life a man rescues it should be his privilege to render as easy and happy as it may lie in his power to make it. You have friends in my mother and me, even though you had not another in the wide world. So, Helga," said I, taking her hand, "however our strange rambles may end, you will promise me not to fret over what your future may hold when you get ashore."

She looked at me with her eyes impassioned with gratitude. Her lips moved, but no word escaped her, and she averted her face to hide her tears.

Poor, brave, gentle, little Helga! I spoke but out of my friendship and my sympathy for her, as who would not, situated as I was with her, my companion in distress, now an orphan, desolate, friendless, and poor? Yet I little knew then, heedless and inexperienced as I was in such matters, how pity in the heart of a young man will swiftly sweeten into deeper emotion when the object of it is young and fair and loving and alone in the world.

The sun went down on a wild scene of troubled, running, foaming waters, darkling into green as they leaped and broke along the western sky that was of a thunderous, smoky tincture, with a hot, dim, and stormy scarlet which flushed the clouds to the zenith. Yet there had been no increase in the wind during the afternoon. It had settled into a hard breeze, good for outward-bounders, but of a sort to send everything heading north that was not steam scattering east and west, with yards fore and aft and tacks complaining.

By this time I had grown very well used to the motion of

the lugger, had marked her easy flight from liquid peak into foam-laced valley, the onward buoyant bound again, the steady rush upon the head of the creaming sea, with foam to the line of the bulwark-rail, and the air for an instant snow-like with flying spume, and all the while the inside of the boat as dry as toast. This, I say, I had noticed with increasing admiration of the sea-going qualities of the hearty, bouncing, stalwart little fabric; and I was no longer sensible of the anxiety that had before possessed me when I had thought of this undecked lugger struggling with a strong and lumpish sea—a mere yawn upon the water, saving her forecastle—so that a single billow tumbling over the rail must send her to the bottom.

"Small wonder," said I to Helga, as we sat watching the sunset and marking the behavior of the boat, "that these Deal luggers should have the greatest reputation of any 'long-shore craft around the English coasts, if they are all like this vessel! Her crew's adventure for Australia is no longer the astonishment I first found it. One might fearlessly sail round the world in such a craft."

"Yes," she answered softly in my ear—for surly Thomas sat hard by—"if the men had the qualities of the boat! But how are they to reach Australia without knowing their longitude? And if you were one of the party, would you trust Abraham's latitude? My father taught me navigation; and, though I am far from skillful at it, I know quite enough to feel sure that such a rough observation as Abraham took to-day will, every twenty-four hours, make him three or four miles wrong, even in his latitude. Where, then, will the 'Early Morn' blunder to?"

"Well, they are plainly a sensitive crew," said I, "and, if we want their good-will, our business is to carry admiring faces, to find everything right, and say nothing."

This chat was ended by Abraham joining us.

"Now, lady," said he, "when would ye like to tarn in? The fore-peak's to be your'n for the night. Name your hour, and whosoever's in it'll have to clear out."

"I am grateful, indeed!" she exclaimed, putting her hand upon his great hairy paw in a pretty, caressing way.

"Abraham," said I, "I hope we shall meet again after we have separated. I'll not forget your kindness to Miss Nielsen."

"Say nothen' about it, sir; say nothen' about it," he cried heartily. "She's a sailor's daughter, for all he warn't an Englishman. Her father lies drownded, Mr. Tregarthen. If he was like his lass he'll have had a good heart, sir, and the sort of countenance one takes to at the first sight o't,"

By the rusty light still living in the west I saw him turn his head to look forward and then aft; then lowering his voice into a deep sea growl, he exclaimed: "'There's wan thing I should like to say: there's no call for either of ye to take any notice along of old Tommy. His feelings is all right; it's his ways as are wrong. Fact is," and here he sent another look forward and then aft, "Tommy's been a disappointed man in his marriages. His first vife took to drink, and was always a-combing of his hair with a three-legged stool, as Jack says. His second vife had the heart of a flint, spite of her prowiding him with ten children, fower by her first and six by Tommy. Of course it's got nothen' to do with me; but there ain't the loike of Molly Budd—I mean Tommy's wife—in all Deal—ay, ye may say in all Kent—for vickedness. Tommy owned to me wan day that though she'd lost children—ay, and though she'd lost good money tew, he'd never knowed her to shed a tear saving wonst. That was when she went out a-chairing. The master of the house had been in the habit of leaving the beer-key in the cask for th' ale to be sarved out by the hupper servant. Molly Budd was a-cleaning there one day, when down comes word for the key to be drawed out of the cask, and never no more to be left in it. This startled Molly. She broke down and cried for a hour. Tommy had some hopes of her on that, but she dried up arterwards, and has never showed any sort of weakness since. But, of course, this is between you and me and the bed-post, Mr. Tregarthen."

"Oh, certainly!" said I.

"And now about the lady's sleeping," he continued.

I was anxious to see her snugly under cover; but she was in trouble to know how I was to get rest. I pointed to the open space under that overhanging ledge of deck which I have before described, and told her that I should find as good a bedroom there as I needed. So after some little discussion it was arranged that she should take possession of the fore-peak at nine o'clock, and, meanwhile, Abraham undertook to so bulkhead the opening under the deck with a spare mizzen-mast, yard, and sail as to insure as much shelter as I should require. I believe he observed Helga's solicitude about me, and proposed this merely to please her; and for the same motive I consented, though I was very unwilling secretly to give the poor honest fellows any unnecessary trouble.

When the twilight died out, the night came down very black. A few lean, windy stars hovered wanly in the dark heights, and no light whatever fell from the sky; but the at-

mosphere low down upon the ocean was pale with the glare of the foam that was plentifully arching from the heads of the seas, and this vague illumination was in the boat to the degree that our figures were almost visible one to another. Indeed, a sort of wave of ghastly sheen would pass through the darkness amid which we sat each time the lugger buried herself in the foam raised by her shearing bounds, as though the dim reflection of a giant lantern had been thrown upon us from on high by some vast shadowy hand searching for what might be upon the sea.

When nine o'clock arrived, Abraham went forward and routed Thomas out of the fore-peak. The man muttered as he came aft to where we were, but I was resolved to have no ears for anything he might say at such a time. A sailor disturbed in his rest, grim, unshorn, scarcely awake, with the nipping night blast to exchange for his blanket, is proverbially the sulkiest and most growling of human wretches.

"I will see you to your chamber door, Helga," said I, laughing. "Abraham, can you spare the lady this lantern? She will not long need it."

"She can have it as long as she likes," he answered. "Good-night to you, mum, and I hope you'll sleep well, I'm sure. Feared ye'll find the fore-peak a bit noisy arter the silence of a big vessel's cabin."

She made some answer, and I picked up the lantern that had been placed in the bottom of the boat for us to sit round, and, with my companion, went clambering over the thwarts to the hatch.

"It is a dark little hole for you to sleep in, Helga," said I, holding the lantern over the hatch while I peered down, "but then—this time last night! Our chances we now know, but what were our hopes?"

"We may be even safer this time to-morrow night," she answered, "and rapidly making for England, let us pray!"

"Ay, indeed!" said I. "Well, if you will get below, I will hand you down the light. Good-night, sleep well, and God bless you."

I grasped and held her hand, then let it go, and she descended, carrying with her the little parcel she had brought with her from the bark.

I gave her the lantern, and returned to smoke a pipe in the bottom of the boat under the shelter of the stern-sheets, before crawling to the sail that was to form my bed under the overhanging deck. Thomas, whose watch below it still was, was already resting under the ledge. Abraham steered, and Jacob

sat with a pipe in his mouth to leeward. I noticed that one of these men always placed himself within instant reach of the fore-sheet. Abraham's talk altogether concerned Helga. He asked many questions about her, and got me to tell for the second time the story of her father's death upon the raft. He frequently broke into homely expressions of sympathy, and when I paused, after telling him that the girl was an orphan and without means, he said:

"Beg pardon, Mr. Tregarthen; but might I make so bold as to ask if so be as you're a married man?"

"No," said I, "I am single."

"And is her heart her own, sir, d'ye know?" said he. "For as like as not there may be some young Danish gent as keeps company with her ashore."

"I can't tell you that," said I.

"If so be as her heart's her own," said he, "then I think even old Tommy could tell 'ee what's agoing to happen."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Why, of course," said he, "you're bound to marry her!"

As she was out of hearing, I could well afford to laugh.

"Well," said I, "the sea has been the cause of more wonderful things than that! Anyway, if I'm to marry her, you must put me in the way of doing so by sending us home as soon as you can."

"Oy," said he, "that we'll do, and I don't reckon, master, that you'd be dispoged to wait ontil we've returned from Australey, that Tommy and me and Jacob might have the satisfaction of drinking your healths and cutting a caper at your marriage."

Jacob broke into a short roar that might or might not have denoted a laugh.

"I shall now turn in," said I, "for I am sleepy. But first I will see if Miss Nielsen is in want of anything, and bring the lantern aft to you."

I went forward and looked down the hatch. By stooping, so as to bring my face on a level with the coaming, I could see the girl. She had placed the lantern in her bunk, and was kneeling in prayer. Her mother's picture was placed behind the lantern, where it lay visible to her, and she held the Bible she had brought from the bark; but that she could read it in that light I doubted. I supposed, therefore, that she grasped it for its sacredness as an object and a relic while she prayed, as a Roman Catholic might hold a crucifix.

I can not express how much I was affected by this simple picture. Not for a million would I have wished her to know

that I watched her; and yet, knowing that she was unconscious I was near, I felt I was no intruder. She had removed her hat; the lantern-light touched her pale hair, and I could see her lips moving as she prayed, with a frequent lifting of her soft eyes. But the beauty, the wonder, the impressiveness of this picture of maidenly devotion came to it from what surrounded it. The little fore-peak, dimly irradiated, showed like some fancy of an old painter upon the shadows and lights of whose masterly canvas lies the gloom of time. The strong wind was full of the noise of warring waters, and of its own wild crying; the foam of the surge roared about the lugger's cleaving bows, and to this was to be added the swift leaps, the level poising, the shooting, downward rushes of the little structure upon that wide, dark breast of wind-swept Atlantic.

She rose to her feet, and, stooping always, for her stature exceeded the height of the upper deck, she carefully replaced the Bible and picture in their cover. I withdrew, and, after waiting a minute or two, I approached again and called down to ask if all was well with her.

"Yes, Hugh," she answered, coming under the hatch with the lantern. "I have made my bed. It was easily made. Will you take this light? The men may want it, and I shall not need to see down here."

I grasped the lantern, and told her I would hold it in the hatch that it might light her while she got into her bunk.

"Good-night, Hugh," said she, and presently called, in her clear, gentle voice, to let me know that she was lying down; on which I took the lantern aft, and, without more ado, crawled under the platform, or raft, as the Deal boatmen called it, crept into a sail, and in a few moments was sound asleep.

And now for three days, incredible as it will appear to those who are acquainted with that part of the sea which the lugger was traversing, we sighted nothing—nothing, I mean, that provided us with the slenderest opportunity of speaking it. At very long intervals, it would be a little streak of canvas on the starboard or port sea-line, or some smudge of smoke from a steamer whose funnel was below the horizon; nothing more, and these so remote that the dim apparitions were as useless to us as though they had never been.

The wind held northerly, and on the Friday and Saturday it blew freshly, and in those hours Abraham reckoned that the "Early Morn" had gone a good two hundred and twenty miles in every day, counting from noon to noon. I was forever searching the sea, and Helga's gaze was as constant as mine; until the eternal barrenness of the sinuous line of the ocean

induced a kind of heart-sickness in me, and I would dismount from the thwart in a passion of vexation and disappointment, asking what had happened that no ship showed? Into what part of the sea had we drifted? Could this veritably be the confines of the Atlantic off the Biscayan coast and waters? or had we been transported by some devil into an unnavigated tract of ocean on the other side of the world?

"There's no want of ships," Abraham said. "The cuss of the matter is, we don't fall in with them. S'elp me, if I could only find one to give me a chance, I'd chivey her even if she showed the canvas of a R'yal Jarge."

"If this goes on you'll have to carry us to Australia," said I, guessing from my spirits as I spoke that I was carrying an uncommonly long and dismal countenance.

"Hope not," exclaimed sour Tommy, who was at the helm at this time of conversation. "'Tain't that we objects to your company; but where's the grub for five souls a-coming from?"

"Don't say nothen' about that," said Abraham, sharply. "Both the gent and the lady brought their own grub along with them. *That* ye know, Tommy, and I allow that ye hain't found their ham bad eating either. They came," he added, softening as he looked at his mate, "like a poor man's twins, each with a loaf clapped by the angels on to its back."

It is true enough that the provisions which had been removed from the raft would have sufficed Helga and me—well, I dare say, for a whole month, and perhaps six weeks, but for the three of a crew falling to the stock; and therefore I was not concerned by the reflection that we were eating into the poor fellows' slender larder. But, for all that, Thomas's remark touched me closely. I felt that if the three fellows, hearty and sailorly as were Abraham and Jacob—I say, I felt that if these three men were not already weary of us they must soon become so, more particularly if it should happen that they met with no ship to supply them with what they might require; in which case they would have to make for the nearest port, a delay they would attribute to us, and that might set them grumbling in their gizzards, and render us both miserable until we got ashore.

However, I was no necromancer; I could not conjure up ships, and staring at the sea-line did not help us; but I very well remember that that time of waiting and of expectation and of disappointment lay very heavily upon my spirits. There was something so strange in the desolation of this sea that I became melancholy and imaginative, and I remember that I

foreboded a dark issue to my extraordinary adventure with Helga, insomuch that I took to heart a secret conviction I should never again see my mother, nay, that I should never again see my home.

Sunday morning came. I found a fine bright day when I crawled out of my sail under the overhanging ledge. The wind had come out of the east in the night, and the "Early Morn," with her sheet aft, was buzzing over the long swell that came flowing and brimming to her side in lines of radiance in the flashing wake of the sun. Jacob was at the tiller, and, on my emerging, he instantly pointed ahead. I jumped on to a thwart, and perceived directly over the bows the leaning, alabaster-like shaft of a ship's canvas.

"How is she steering?" I cried.

"Slap for us," he answered.

"Come!" I exclaimed, with a sudden delight, "we shall be giving you a farewell shake of the hand at last, I hope. You'll have to signal her," I went on, looking at the lugger's masthead. "What colors will you fly to make her know your wants?"

"Ye see that there pole?" exclaimed Thomas, in a grunting voice, pointing with a shovel-ended forefinger to the spare booms along the side of the boat. I nodded. "Well," said he, "I suppose you know what the Jack is?"

"Certainly," said I.

"Well," he repeated, "we seizes the Jack on to that there pole and hangs it over, and if that don't stop 'em it'll be 'cause they have a cargo of wheat aboard, the fumes of which'll have entered their eyes and struck 'em bloind."

"That's so," said Jacob, with a nod.

Just then Abraham came from under the deck, and in another moment Helga rose through the little hatch, and they both joined us.

"At last, Helga!" I cried, with a triumphant face, pointing.

She looked with her clear blue eyes for a little while in silence at the approaching vessel, as though to make sure of the direction she was heading in, then, clasping her hands, she exclaimed, drawing a breath like a sigh, "Yes, at last. Hugh, your home is not so very far off now."

"What's she loike?" said Abraham, bringing his knuckles out of his eyes and staring.

He went to the locker for a little, old-fashioned, 'longshore telescope, pointed it, and said, "A bit of a bark. A furriner."

He peered again, "A Hamburger," cried he. "Look, Tommy!"

The man put the glass to his eye and leaned against the rail, and his mouth lay with a sour curl under the little telescope as he stared through it.

"Yes, a whoite hull and a Hamburger," said he, "and she's coming along tew. There'll be no time, I allow, to bile the coffee-pot afore she's abreast," he added, casting a hungry, morose eye toward the little cooking-stove.

"Ye can loight the foire, Tommy," said Abraham, "whoilst I signlize her," saying which he took an English Jack out of that locker in which he kept the soap, towels, and, as it seemed to me, pretty well all the crew's little belongings, and, having secured the flag to the end of the pole, he thrust it over the side and fell to motioning with it, continuing to do so until it was impossible to doubt that the people of the little bark had beheld the signal. He then let the pole with the flag flying upon it rest upon the rail, and took hold of the fore-halliards in readiness to let the sail drop.

I awaited the approach of the bark with breathless anxiety. I never questioned for a moment that she would take us aboard, and my thoughts flew ahead to the moment when Helga and I should be safely in her: when we should be looking round and finding a stout little ship under our feet, the lugger with her poor plucky Deal sailors standing away from us to the southward, and the horizon past which lay the coast of Old England fair over the bows.

"Shove us close alongside, Jacob," cried Abraham.

"Shall 'ee hook on, Abraham?" inquired Jacob.

"No call to it," answered Abraham. "We'll down lug and hail her. She'll back her tawps, and I'll put the parties aboard in the punt."

"I have left my parcel in the fore-peak," said Helga, and was going for it.

"I'm nimbler than you can be now, Helga," said I, smiling, and meaning that now she was in her girlish attire she had not my activity.

I jumped forward, and plunged down the hatch, took the parcel out of the bunk, and returned with it, all in such a wild feverish hurry that one might have supposed the lugger was sinking, and that a moment of time might signify life or death to me. Abraham grinned, but made no remark. Thomas, on his knees before the stove, was sulkily blowing at some shavings he had kindled. Jacob, with a wooden face at

the tiller, was keeping the bows of the "Early Morn" on a line with the oncoming vessel.

The bark was under a full breast of canvas, and was heeling prettily to the pleasant breeze of wind that was gushing brilliantly out of the eastern range of heaven made glorious by the soaring sun. Her hull sat white as milk upon the dark-blue water, and her canvas rose in squares which resembled mother-of-pearl with the intermixture of shadow and flashing light upon them occasioned by her rolling, so that the cloths looked shot like watered silk or like the inside of an oyster shell. But it was distance on top of the delight that her coming raised in me which gave her the enchantment I found in her, for, as she approached, her hull lost its snow-like glare and showed somewhat dingily with rusty stains from the scupper-holes. Her canvas, too, lost its symmetry and exhibited an ill-set pile of cloths, most of the clews straining at a distance from the yard-arm sheave-holes, and I also took notice of the disfigurement of a stump-foretopgallant-mast.

"Dirty as a Portugee," said Abraham; "yet she's Jarman all the same."

"I never took kindly to the Jarmans, myself," said Jacob; "they're a shoving people, but they aren't clean. Give me the Dutch. What's to beat their cheeses? There's nothing made in England in the cheese line as aquils them Dutch cannon-balls, all pink outside and all cream hin."

"Do you mean by a Hamburger a Hamburg ship?" asked Helga.

"Yes, lady, that's right," answered Abraham.

"Then she's bound to Hamburg," said the girl.

"Ask yourself the question," answered Abraham—which is the Deal boatmen's way of saying yes.

She looked at me.

"It will be all the same," said I, interpreting the glance; "England is but over the way from Hamburg. Let us be homeward-bound in any case. We have made southing enough, Helga."

"Tommy!" sung out Abraham, "give that there Jack another flourish, will ye?"

The man did so, with many strange contortions of his powerful frame, and then put down the pole and returned to the stove.

"There don't seem much life aboard her," said Jacob, eying the bark. "I can only count wan head ower the fo'k'sle rail."

"Up hellum, Jacob!" bawled Abraham, and as he said the words he let go the fore-halliards, and down came the sail.

The lugger, with nothing showing but her little mizzen, lost way, and rose and fell quietly beam-on to the bark, whose head was directly at us, as though she must cut us down. When she was within a few cables' length of us she slightly shifted her helm and drew out. A man sprung on to her forecastle rail and yelled at us, brandishing his arms in a motioning way, as though in abuse of us for getting into the road. We strained our ears.

"What do 'ee say?" growled Abraham, looking at Helga.

"I do not understand him," she answered.

"Bark ahoy!" roared Abraham.

The man on the forecastle-head fell silent, and watched us over his folded arms.

"Bark ahoy!" yelled Jacob.

The vessel was now showing her length to us. On Jacob shouting a man came very quietly to the bulwarks near the mizzen rigging and, with sluggish motions, got upon the rail, where he stood holding on by a back-stay, gazing at us lifelessly. The vessel was so close that I could distinguish every feature of the fellow, and I see him now, as I write, with his fur cap and long coat and half boots and beard like oakum. The vessel was manifestly steered by a wheel deep behind the deck-house, and neither helm nor helmsman was visible—no living being, indeed, saving the motionless figure on the forecastle head and the equally lifeless figure holding on by the backstay aft.

"Bark ahoy!" thundered Abraham. "Back your tawps'l, will 'ee? Here's a lady and gent as we wants to put aboard ye: they're in distress. They've bin shipwreckt—they wants to git home. Heave to, for Gord's sake, if so be as you're *men!*"

Neither figure showed any indications of vitality.

"What! are they corpses?" cried Abraham.

"No, they're wuss—they're Jarmans!" answered Jacob, spitting fiercely.

On a sudden the fellow who was aft nodded at us, then kissed his hand, solemnly dismounted, and vanished, leaving no one in sight but the man forward, who a minute later disappeared also.

Abraham drew a deep breath and looked at me. His countenance suddenly changed. His face crimsoned with temper, and, with a strange, ungainly, 'longshore plunge he sprung on top of the gunwale, supporting himself by a grip of the burton of the mizzen-mast with one hand while he shook his other fist in a very ecstasy of passion at the retreating vessel.

"Call yourselves *men!*" he roared. "I'll have the law along of ye! It'll be *me* as'll report ye! Don't think as I can't spell. H, A, N, S, A—Hansa. There it is, wrote big as life on your blooming starn! I'll remember ye! You sausage-eaters—you scowbankers—you scaramouches—you varmint! Call yourselves *sailors?* Only gi' me a chance of getting alongside!"

He continued to rage in this fashion, interlarding his language with words which sent Helga to the boat's side, and held her there with averted face; but, all the same, it was impossible to keep one's gravity. Vexed, maddened, indeed, as I was by the disappointment, it was as much as I could do to hold my countenance. The absurdity lay in this raving at a vessel that had passed swiftly out of hearing, and upon whose deck not a living soul was visible.

Having exhausted all that he was able to think of in the way of abuse, Abraham dismounted, flung his cap into the bottom of the boat, and, drying his brow by passing the whole length of his arm along it, he exclaimed:

"There—now I've given 'em something to think of!"

"Why, there was ne'er a soul to hear a word ye said," said Thomas, who was still busy at the stove, without looking up.

"See here!" shouted Abraham, rounding upon him with the heat of a man glad of another excuse to quarrel. "Dorn't you have nothen' to say. No sarce from you, and so I tells ye. I know all about ye. When did ye pay your rent last, eh? Answer me that!" he sneered.

"Oh, that's it, is it? that's the time o' day, eh?" growled Thomas, looking slowly but fiercely round upon Abraham, and stolidly rising into a menacing posture, that was made wholly ridiculous by the clergyman's coat he wore. "And what's my rent got to do with you? 'T all events, if I am a bit behoindhand in my rent, moy farder was never locked up for six months."

"Say for smuggling, Tommy, say for smuggling, or them parties as is a-listening'll think the ould man did something wrong," said Jacob.

Helga took me by the arm.

"Oh, Hugh, silence them—they will come to blows."

"No, no," said I, quickly, in a low voice. "I know this type of men. There must be much more shouting than this before they double up their fists."

Still it was a stupid passage of temper, fit only to be quickly ended.

"Come, Abraham," I cried, waiting till he had finished

roaring out some further offensive question to Thomas: "let us get sail on the boat and make an end of this. The trial of temper should be mine, not yours. Luck seems against the lady and me; and let me beg of you, as a good fellow and an English seaman, not to frighten Miss Nielsen."

"What does Tommy want to sarce me for?" said he, still breathing defiance at his mate out of his large nostrils and blood-red visage.

"What's my rent got to do with you?" shouted the other.

"And what's moy father got to do with you?" bawled Abraham.

"I say, Jacob," I cried, "for God's sake let's tail on to the halliards and start afresh. There's no good in all this!"

"Come along, Abey, come along, Tommy!" bawled Jacob. "Droy up, mates! More'n enough's been said;" and with that he laid hold of the halliards, and, without another word, Abraham and Thomas seized the rope too, and the sail was mastheaded.

Abraham went to the tiller, the other two went to work to get breakfast, and now, in a silence that was not a little refreshing after the coarse hoarse clamor of the quarrel, the lugger buzzed onward afresh.

"We shall be more fortunate next time," said Helga, looking wistfully at me; and well I knew there was no want of worry in my face; for now there was peace in the boat the infamous cold-blooded indifference of the rogues we had just passed made me feel half mad.

"We might have been starving," said I; "we might have been perishing for the want of a drink of water, and still the ruffians would have treated us so."

"It is but waiting a little longer, Hugh," said Helga, softly.

"Ay, but how much longer, Helga?" said I. "Must we wait for Cape Town, or perhaps Australia?"

"Mr. Tregarthen, don't let imagination run away with ye," exclaimed Abraham, in a voice of composure that was not a little astonishing after his recent outbreak; though, having a tolerably intimate knowledge of the 'longshore character, and being very well aware that the words these fellows hurl at one another mean very little, and commonly end in nothing—unless the men are drunk—I was not very greatly surprised by the change in our friend. "There's nothen' that upsets the moind quicker than imagination. I'll gi' ye a yarn. There's an old chap, of the name of Billy Buttress, as crawls about our beach. A little grandson o' his took the glasses out o' his

spectacles by way o' amusing hisself. When old Billy puts 'em on to read with he sings out, 'God bless me, Oi'm gone bloind!' and trembling, and all of a clam, as the saying is, he outs with his handkerchief to woipe the glasses, thinking it might be dirt as hindered him from seeing, and then he cries out, 'Lor' now, if I ain't lost my feeling!' He wasn't to be comforted till they sent for a pint o' ale and showed him that his glasses had been took out. That's imagination, master. Don't you be afeered. We'll be setting ye aboard a homeward-bounder afore long."

By the time the fellows had got breakfast, the hull of the bark astern was out of sight; nothing showed of her but a little hovering glance of canvas, and the sea-line swept from her to ahead of us in a bare unbroken girdle.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SAILOR'S DEATH.

THE day slipped away; there were no more disputes; Thomas went to lie down, and, when Jacob took the tiller, Abraham pulled a little book out of his locker and read it, with his lips moving, holding it out at arm's length, as though it were a daguerreotype that was only discernible in a certain light. I asked him the name of the book.

"The Boible," said he. "It's the Sabbath, master, and I always read a chapter of this here book on Sundays."

Helga started.

"It is Sunday, indeed!" she exclaimed. "I had forgotten it. How swiftly do the days come round! It was a week last night since we left the bay, and this day week my father was alive—my dear father was alive!"

She opened the parcel and took out the little Bible that had belonged to her mother. I had supposed it was in Danish, but on my taking it from her I found it an English Bible. But then I recollected that her mother had been English. I asked her to read aloud to me, and she did so, pronouncing every word in a clear, sweet voice. I recollect it was a chapter out of the New Testament, and while she read Abraham put down his book to listen, and Jacob leaned forward from the tiller with a straining ear.

In this fashion the time passed.

I went to my miserable bed of spare sail under the overhanging deck shortly after nine o'clock that night. This unsheltered opening was truly a cold, windy, miserable bedroom

for a man who could not in any way claim that he was used to hardship. Indeed, the wretchedness of the accommodation was as much a cause as any other condition of our situation of my wild, headlong impatience to get away from the lugger and sail for home in a ship that would find me shelter and a bed and room to move in, and those bare conveniences of life which were lacking aboard the "Early Morn."

Well, as I have said, shortly after nine o'clock on that Sunday, I bid good-night to Abraham, who was steering the vessel, and entered my sleeping abode, where Jacob was lying rolled up in a blanket, snoring heavily. It was then a dark night, but the wind was scant, and the water smooth, and but little motion of swell in it. I had looked for a star, but there was none to be seen, and then I had looked for a ship's light, but the dusk stood like a wall of blackness within a musket-shot of the lugger's sides—for that was about as far as one could see the dim crawling of the foam to windward and its receding glimmer on the other hand—and there was not the faintest point of green or red or white anywhere visible.

I lay awake for some time: sleep could make but little headway against the battery of snorts and gasps which the Deal boatman, lying close beside me, opposed to it. My mind also was uncommonly active with worry and anxiety. I was dwelling constantly upon my mother, recalling her as I had last seen her by the glow of the fire in her little parlor when I gave her that last kiss and ran out of the house. It is eight days ago, thought I; and it seemed incredible that the time should have thus fled. Then I thought of Helga, the anguish of heart the poor girl had suffered, her heroic acceptance of her fate, her simple piety, her friendlessness and her future.

In this way was my mind occupied when I fell asleep, and I afterward knew that I must have lain for about an hour wrapped in the heavy slumber that comes to a weary man at sea.

I was awakened by a sound of the crashing and splintering of wood. This was instantly succeeded by a loud and fearful cry, accompanied by the noise of a heavy splash, immediately followed by hoarse shouts. One of the voices I believed was Abraham's, but the blending of the distressed and terrified bawlings rendered them confounding, and scarcely distinguishable. It was pitch dark where I lay. I got on to my knees to crawl out; but some spare sail that Abraham had contrived as a shelter for me had slipped from its position, and obstructed me, and I lay upon my knees wrestling for a few minutes before I could free myself. In this time my belief

was that the lugger had been in collision with some black shadow of ship invisible to the helmsman in the darkness, and that she might be now, even while I kneeled wrestling with the sail, going down under us, with Helga, perhaps, still in the forepeak. This caused me to struggle furiously, and presently I got clear of the blinding and hugging folds of the canvas; but I was almost spent with fear and exertion.

Some one continued to shout, and by the character of his cries I gathered that he was hailing a vessel close to. It was blowing a sharp squall of wind, and raining furiously. The darkness was that of the inside of a mine, and all that I could see was the figure of a boatman leaning over the side and holding the lantern (that was kept burning all night) on a level with the gunwale while he shouted, and then listened, and then shouted again.

"What has happened!" I cried.

The voice of Jacob, though I could not see him, answered, in a tone I shall never forget for the misery and consternation of it:

"The foremast's carried away and knocked poor old Tommy overboard. He's drownded! he's drownded! He don't make no answer. His painted clothes and boots have took him down as if he was a dipsy lead."

"Can he swim?" I cried.

"No, sir, no!"

I sprung to where Abraham overhung the rail.

"Will he be lying fouled by the gear over the side, do you think?" I cried to the man.

"No, sir," answered Abraham; "he drifted clear. He sung out once as he went astern. What a thing to happen! Can't launch the punt with the lugger a wreck," he added, talking as though he thought aloud in his misery. "We'd stand to lose the lugger if we launched the punt."

"Listen!" shouted Jacob, and he sent his voice in a bull-like roar into the blackness astern: "Tom-mee!"

There was nothing to be heard but the shrilling of the sharp-edged squall rushing athwart the boat, that now lay beam on to it, and the slashing noise of the deluge of rain horizontally streaming, and the grinding of the wrecked gear alongside with frequent sharp slaps of the rising sea against the bends of the lugger, and the fierce snarling of melting heads of waters suddenly and savagely vexed and flashed into spray while curling.

"What is it?" cried the voice of Helga in my ear.

"Ah, thank Heaven, you are safe!" I cried, feeling for her

hand and grasping it. "A dreadful thing has happened. The lugger has been dismasted, and the fall of the spar has knocked the man Thomas overboard."

"He may be swimming!" she exclaimed.

"No! no! no!" growled Abraham, in a voice hoarse with grief. "He's gone—he's gone! We shall never see him again." Then his note suddenly changed. "Jacob, the raffle alongside must be got in at wonst: let's bear a hand afore the sea jumps aboard. Lady, will ye hold the loight? Mr. Tregarthen, we shall want you to help us."

"Willingly!" I cried.

I remembered at that moment that my oilskin coat lay in the side of the boat close to where I stood. I stooped and felt it, and in a moment I had whipped it over Helga's shoulders, for she was now holding the lantern, and I had her clear in my sight. It would be a godsend to her, I knew, in the wet that was now sluicing past us, and that must speedily have soaked her to the skin, clad as she was.

For the next few minutes all was bustle and hoarse shouts. I see little Helga, now, hanging over the side and swinging the lantern, that its light might touch the wreckage; I see the crystals of rain flashing past the lantern and blinding the glass of it with wet; I feel again the rush of the fierce squall upon my face, making breathing a labor, while I grab hold of the canvas, and help the men to drag the great, sodden heavy sail into the boat. We worked desperately, and, as I have said, in a few minutes we had got the whole of the sail out of the water; but the mast was too heavy to handle in the blackness, and it was left to float clear of us by the halliards till daylight should come.

We were wet through, and chilled to the heart besides—I speak of myself, at least—not more by the sharp bite of that black, wet squall than by the horror occasioned by the sudden loss of a man, by the thought of one as familiar to the sight as hourly association could make him, who was just now living and talking—lying cold and still, sinking fathoms deep into the heart of that dark measureless profound on whose surface the lugger—in all probability the tiniest ark at that moment afloat in the oceans she was attempting to traverse—was tumbling.

"Haul aft the mizzen-sheet, Jacob!" said Abraham in a voice hoarse indeed, but marked with depression also. "Ye can secure the tiller too. She must loie as she is till we can see what we're about."

The man went aft with a lantern. He speedily executed

Abraham's orders; but by the aid of the dim lantern-light I could see him standing motionless in the stern-sheets, as though harkening and straining his gaze.

"He's gone, Abraham!" he cried, suddenly, in a rough voice that trembled with emotion. "There will be never no more to hear of Tommy Budd. Ay, gone dead—drownded forever!" I heard him mutter, as he picked up the lantern and came with heavy booted legs clambering over the thwarts to us.

"As God's my loife, how sudden it were!" cried Abraham, making his hands meet in a sharp report in the passion of grief with which he clapped them.

It was still raining hard, and the atmosphere was of a midnight blackness; but all the hardness of the squall was gone out of the wind, and it was now blowing a steady breeze, such as we should have been able to expose our whole lugsail to could we have hoisted it. Jacob held the lantern to the mast, or rather to the fragment that remained of it. You must know that a Deal lugger's mast is stepped in what is termed a "tabernacle"—that is to say, a sort of box, which enables the crew to lower or set up their mast at will. This "tabernacle," with us, stood a little less than two feet above the forepeak deck, and the mast had been broken at some ten feet above it. It showed in very ugly, fang-like points.

"Two rotten masts for such a voyage as this!" cried Jacob, with a savage note in his voice. "'Tis old Thompson's work. Would he was in Tommy's place! S'elp me! I'd give half the airnings of this voyage for the chance to drown him!"

By which I might gather that he referred to the boat-builder who had supplied the masts.

"No use in standing in this drizzle, men," said I. "It's a bad job, but there's nothing to be done for the present, Abraham. There's shelter to be got under this deck, here. Have you another lantern?"

"What for?" asked Abraham, in the voice of a man utterly broken down.

"Why, to show," said I, "lest we should be run into. Here we are stationary, you know, and who's to see us as we lie?"

"And a blooming good job if we was run into!" returned Abraham. "Blarst me if I couldn't chuck moyself overboard!"

"Nonsense!" cried I, alarmed by his tone rather than by his words. "Let us get under shelter! Here, Jacob, give me the light! Now, Helga, crawl in first and show us the

road. Abraham, in with you! Jacob, take this lantern, will you, and get one of those jars of spirits you took off the raft, and a mug and some cold water! Abraham will be the better for a dram, and so will you."

The jar was procured, and each man took a hearty drink. I, too, found comfort in a dram, but I could not induce Helga to put the mug to her lips. The four of us crouched under the overhanging deck—there was no height and, indeed, no breadth for an easier posture. We set the lantern in our midst—I had no more to say about showing the light—and in this dim irradiation we gazed at one another. Abraham's countenance looked of a ghostly white. Jacob, with mournful gestures, filled a pipe, and his melancholy visage resembled some grotesque face beheld in a dream as he opened the lantern and thrust his nose, with a large rain-drop hanging at the end of it, close to the flame to light the tobacco.

"To think that I should have had a row with him only this marning!" growled Abraham, hugging his knees. "What roight had I to go and sarce him about his rent? Will any man tell me," said he, slowly looking round, "that poor old Tommy's heart warn't in the roight place? Oi hope not, Oi hope not—Oi couldn't abear to hear it said. He was a man as had had to struggle hard for his bread like others along of us, and disappointment and want and marriage had tarned his blood hacid. Oi've known him to pass three days without biting a crust. The wery bed on which he lay was took from him. Yet he bore up, and without th' help o' drink, and I says that to the pore chap's credit."

He paused.

"At bottom," exclaimed Jacob, sucking hard at his inch of sooty clay, "Tommy was a man. He once saved my loife. You remember, Abey, that job I had along with him when we was a-towing down on the quarter of a big, light Spaniard?"

"I remember, I remember," grunted Abraham.

"The boat sheered," continued Jacob, addressing me, "and got agin the steamer's screw, and the stroke of the blade cut the boat roight in halves. They chucked us a loife-buoy. Poor old Tommy got hold of it and heads for me, who were drowning some fadoms off. He clutched me by the hair just in toime, and held me till we was picked up. And now he's gone dead, and we shall never see him no more."

"Tommy Budd," exclaimed Abraham, "was that sort of man that he never took a pint himself without asking a chap to have a glass tew, if so be as he had the valley of it on him. There was no smarter man fore and aft the beach in steering

a galley-punt. There was scarce a regatta but what he was fust."

"He was a upright man," said Jacob, observing that Abraham had paused; "and never more upright than when he warn't sober, which proves how true his instincts was. When his darter got married to young Darkey Dick, as Tommy didn't think a soctable match, he walks into the room of the public-house where the company was dancing and enjoying themselves, kicked the whole blooming party out into the road, then sits down, and calls for a glass himself. Of course he'd had a drop too much. But the drink only improved his nat'ral disloike of the wedding. Pore Tommy! Abey, pass along that jar!"

In this fashion these plain, simple-hearted souls of boatmen continued for some time, with now and again an interlude in the direction of the spirit-jar, to bewail the loss of their unhappy shipmate. Our situation, however, was of a sort that would not suffer the shock caused by the man Thomas's death to be very lasting. Here we were, in what was little better than an open boat of eighteen tons, lying dismasted, and entirely helpless, amid the solitude of a black midnight in the Atlantic Ocean, with nothing but an already wounded mast to depend upon when daybreak should come to enable us to set it up, and the lugger's slender crew less by one able hand!

It was still a thick and drizzling night, with a plentiful sobbing of water alongside; but the "Early Morn," under her little mizzen and with her bows almost head to sea, rose and fell quietly. By this time the men had pretty well exhausted their lamentations over Thomas. I therefore ventured to change the subject.

"Now there are but two of you," said I, "I suppose you'll up with your mast to-morrow morning and make for home?"

"No fear!" answered Abraham, speaking with briskness out of the drams he had swallowed. "We're agoing to Australey, and if so be as another of us ain't taken we'll git there."

"But surely you'll not continue this voyage with the outfit you now have?" said I.

"Well," said he, "we shall have to 'fish' the mast that's sprung and try and make it sarve till we falls in with a wessel as'll give us a sound spar to take the mast's place. Anyhow, we shall keep all on."

"Ay, we shall keep all on," said Jacob: "no use coming all this way to tarn back again. Why, Gor' bless me, what 'ud be said of us?"

"But, surely," said Helga, "two of you'll not be able to manage this big boat?"

"Lord love 'ee, yes, lady," cried Abraham. "Mind ye, if we was out a pleasuring I should want to get home; but there's money to take up at the end of this ramble, and Jacob and me means to airn it."

Thus speaking, he crawled out to have a look at the weather, and was, a moment later, followed by Jacob, and presently I could hear them both earnestly consulting on what was to be done when the morning came, and how they were to manage afterward, now that Thomas was gone.

The light of the lantern lay upon Helga's face as she sat close beside me on the spare sail that had formed my rough couch.

"What further experiences are we to pass through?" said I.

"Little you guessed what was before you when you came off to us in the life-boat, Hugh!" said she, gazing gently at me with eyes which seemed black in the dull light.

"These two boatmen," said I, "are very good fellows, but there is a pig-headedness about them that does not improve our distress. Their resolution to proceed might appear as a wonderful stroke of courage to a landsman's mind, but to a sailor it could signify nothing more than the rankest foolhardiness. A plague upon their heroism! A little timidity would mean common sense, and then to-morrow morning we should be heading for home. But I fear you are wet through, Helga."

"No, your oilskin has kept me dry," she answered.

"No need for you to stay here," said I. "Why not return to the forepeak and finish out the night?"

"I would rather remain with you, Hugh."

"Ay, Helga, but you must spare no pains to fortify yourself with rest and food. Who knows what the future may be holding for us—how heavily the pair of us may yet be tried? These experiences, so far, may prove but a few links of a chain whose end is still a long way off."

She put her hand on the back of mine, and tenderly stroked it.

"Hugh," said she, "remember our plain friend Abraham's advice: Do not let imagination run away with you. The spirit that brought you to the side of the 'Anine' in the black and dreadful night is still your own. Cheer up! All will be well with you yet. What makes me say this? I can not tell, if it be not the conviction that God will not leave un-

watched one whose trials have been brought about by an act of noble courage and of beautiful resolution."

She continued to caress my hand as she spoke—an unconscious gesture in her, as I perceived—may be it was a habit of her affectionate heart, and I could figure her thus caressing her father's hand, or the hand of a dear friend. Her soft eyes were upon my face as she addressed me, and there was light enough to enable me to distinguish a little encouraging smile full of sweetness upon her lips.

If ever strength is to be given to a man in a time of bitter anxiety and peril, the inspiration of spirit must surely come from such a little woman as this. I felt the influence of her manner and of her presence.

"You have a fine spirit, Helga," said I. "Your name should be Nelson instead of Nielsen. The blood of nothing short of the greatest of English captains should be in your veins."

She laughed softly and answered:

"No, no! I am a Dane first. Let me be an English girl next."

Well, I again endeavored to persuade her to withdraw to her bunk, but she begged hard to remain with me, and so for a long while we continued to sit and talk. Her speaking of herself as a Dane first and an Englishwoman afterward started her on the subject of her home and childhood, and once again she talked of Kolding and of her mother, and of the time she had spent in London, and of an English school she had been put to. I could overhear the rumbling of the two fellows' voices outside. By and by I crawled out and found the rain had ceased; but it was pitch dark, and blowing a cold wind. Jacob had lighted the fire in the stove. His figure showed in the ruddy glare as he squatted toasting his hands. I returned to Helga, and presently Abraham arrived to ask us if we would have a drop of hot coffee. This was a real luxury at such a time. We gratefully took a mugful, and with the help of it made a midnight meal off a biscuit and a little tinned meat.

How we scraped through those long, dark, wet hours I will not pretend to describe. Toward the morning Helga fell asleep by my side on the sail upon which we were crouching, but for my part I could get no rest, nor, indeed, did I strive or wish for it. One thing coming on top of another had rendered me unusually nervous, and all the while I was thinking that our next experience might be the feeling some great shearing stem of a sailing ship or steamer striking into the

lugger and drowning the lot of us before we could well realize what had happened. I was only easy in my mind when the boatmen carried the lantern out from under the overhanging deck for some purpose or other.

It came at last, however, to my being able no longer to conceal my apprehensions, and then, after some talk and a bit of hearty "pooh-poohing" on the part of Abraham, he consented to secure the light to the stump of the mast.

This might have been at about half past three o'clock in the morning, when the night was blacker than it had been at any previous hour; and then a very strange thing followed. I had returned to my shelter, and was sitting lost in thought, for Helga was now sleeping. The two boatmen were in the open, but what they were about I could not tell you. I was sunk deep in gloomy thought, as I have said, when on a sudden I heard a sound of loud bawling. I went out as quickly as my knees would carry me, and the first thing I saw was the green light of a ship glimmering faintly as a glow-worm out in the darkness abeam. I knew her to be a sailing-ship, for she showed no masthead light, but there was not the dimmest outline to be seen of her. Her canvas threw no pallor upon the midnight wall of atmosphere. But for that fluctuating green light, showing so illusively that one needed to look a little on one side of it to catch it, the ocean would have been as bare as the heavens, so far as the sight went. One after the other the two boatmen continued to shout "Ship ahoy!" in hearty roaring voices, which they sent flying through the arching of their hands; but the light went sliding on, and in a few minutes the screen in which it was hung eclipsed it; and it was all blackness again, look where one would.

There was nothing to be said about this to the men. I crept back to Helga, who had been awakened by the hoarse shouts.

"Some sailing-vessel has passed us," said I, in answer to her inquiry, "as we may know by the green light; but how near or far I can not tell. Yet it is more likely than not, Helga, that but for my begging Abraham to keep a light showing that same ship might have run us down."

We conversed awhile about the vessel and our chances, and then her voice grew languid again with drowsiness, and she fell asleep.

Somewhile before dawn the rain ceased, the sky brightened, and here and there a star showed. I had been out overhanging the gunwale with Abraham, and listening to him as he talked about his mate Thomas, and how the children were to

manage now that the poor fellow was taken, when the gray of the dawn rose floating into the sky off the black rim of the sea.

In a short time the daylight was abroad, with the pink of the coming sun swiftly growing in glory among the clouds in the east. Jacob sat sleeping in the bottom of the boat, squatting Lascar fashion—a huddle of coat and angular knees and bowed head. I got upon a thwart and sent a long thirsty look round.

"By Heaven, Abraham!" I cried, "*nothing* in sight, as I live to say it! What, in the name of hope, has come to the sea?"

"We're agoing to have a fine day, I'm thankful to say," he answered, turning up his eyes. "But, Lord! what a wreck the lugger looks!"

The poor fellow was as haggard as though he had risen from a sick-bed, and this sudden gauntness or elongation of countenance was not a little heightened by a small powdering of the crystals of salt lying white under the hollow of each eye where the brine that had been swept up by the squall had lodged and dried.

"Hi, Jacob!" he cried; "rouse up, matey! Day's broke, and there's work to be done."

Jacob staggered to his feet with many contortions and grimaces.

"Chock-a-block with rheumatics," he growled; "that's how the sea sarves a man. They said it 'ud get warmer the furder we drawed down this way; but if this be what they calls warm, give me the scissors and thumbscrews of a Janivary gale in the Jarman Ocean." He gazed slowly around him, and fixed his eyes on the stump of the mast. "Afore we begin, Abraham," said he, "I must have a drop of hot corffee."

"Right," answered the other; "a quarter of an hour isn't going to make any difference."

A fire was kindled, a kettle of water boiled, and, Helga now arriving, the four of us sat, every one with a mug of the comforting steaming beverage in his hand, while the two boatmen settled the procedure of strengthening the wounded spar by "fishing it," as it is termed, and of making sail afresh.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE END OF THE "EARLY MORN."

THE first business of the men was to get the broken mast out of the water. Helga helped, and worked with as much dexterity as though she had been bred to the calling of the Deal waterman. The mast in breaking had been shortened by ten feet, and was therefore hardly as useful a spar to step as the bowsprit. It was laid along the thwarts in the side, and we went to work to strengthen the mast that had been sprung in the Channel by laying pieces of wood over the fractured part, and securely binding them by turn upon turn of rope. This, at sea, they call "fishing a spar." Jacob shook his head as he looked at the mast when we had made an end of the repairs, but said nothing. When the mast was stepped, we hoisted the sail with a reef in it to ease the strain. Abraham went to the tiller, the boat's head was put to a south-west course, and once again the little fabric was pushing through it, rolling in a long-drawn way upon a sudden swell that had risen while we worked, with a frequent little vicious shake of white waters off her bow, as though the combing of the small seas irritated her.

The wind was about east, of a November coldness, and it blew somewhat lightly till a little before ten o'clock in the morning, when it came along freshening in a gust which heeled the boat sharply, and brought a wild, anxious look into Abraham's eyes as he gazed at the mast. The horizon slightly thickened to some film of mist which overlay the windward junction of heaven and water, and the sky then took a windy face, with dim breaks of blue betwixt long streaks of hard vapor, under which there nimbly sailed, here and there, a wreath of light-yellow scud. The sea rapidly became sloppy—an uncomfortable tumble of billows occasioned by the lateral run of the swell—and the boat's gait grew so staggering, such a sense of internal dislocation was induced by her brisk, jerky wobbling—now to windward now to leeward, now by the stern now by the head, then all the motions happening together, as it were, followed by a sickly, leaning slide down some slope of rounded water—that for the first time in my life I felt positively sea-sick, and was not a little thankful for the relief I obtained from a nip of poor Captain Nielsen's brandy out of one of the few jars which had been taken from the raft, and which still remained full.

Somewhile before noon it was blowing a fresh breeze, with a somewhat steadier sea; but the rolling and plunging of the lugger continued sharp and exceedingly uncomfortable. To still further help the mast—Abraham having gone into the fore-peak to get a little sleep—Helga and I, at the request of Jacob, who was steering, tied a second reef in the sail; though, had the spar been sound, the lugger would have easily borne the whole of her canvas.

"If that mast goes, what is to be done?" said I to Jacob.

"Whoy," he answered, "we shall have to make shift with the remains of the mast that went overboard last night."

"But what sail will you be able to hoist on that shortened height?"

"Enough to keep us slowly blowing along," he answered, "till we falls in with a wessel as will help us to the sort o' spar as'll sarve."

"Considering the barrenness of the sea we have been sailing through," said I, "the look-out seems a poor one, if we're to depend upon passing assistance."

"Mr. Tregarthen," said he, fixing his eyes upon my face, "I'm an older man nor you, and therefore I takes the liberty of telling ye this: that neither ashore nor at sea do things fall out in the fashion as is hanticipated. That's what the Hitalian organ-grinder discovered. He con-ceived that if he could get hold of a big monkey he'd do a good trade; so he buys the biggest he could meet with—a chap pretty nigh as big as himself. What happened? When them parties was met with a week arterward, it was the monkey that was a-turning the handle, while the horgan-grinder was doing the dancing."

"The public wouldn't know the difference," said Helga.

"True for you, lady," answered Jacob, with an approving nod and a smile of admiration. "But Mr. Tregarthen here'll find out that I'm speaking the Lard's truth when I says that human hanticipation always works out contrariwise."

"I heartily hope it may do so in our case!" I exclaimed, vexed by the irrationality, as it seemed to me, of this homely boatman's philosphic views.

"About toime for Abraham to take soights, ain't it?" said he.

I went to the hatch and called to Abraham, who in a few minutes arrived, and, with sleepy eyes, fell to groping after the sun with his old quadrant. While he was thus occupied, Helga touched me lightly on the shoulder and pointed astern. I peered an instant, and then said:

"I see it! A sail!—at the wrong end of the sea again, of course! Another "Thermopylæ," may be, to thunder past us with no further recognition of our wants than a wagging head over the rail, with a finger at its nose."

"It's height bells!" cried Abraham; and he sat down to his rough calculations.

Jacob looked soberly over his shoulder at the distant tiny space of white canvas.

"If there's business to be done with her," said he, "we must steer to keep her head right at our starn. What course'll she be taking?"

"She appears to be coming directly at us," answered Helga.

"Why not lower your sail, heave the lugger to, and fly a distress signal?" said I.

I had scarcely uttered the words when the boat violently jumped a sea; a crash followed, and the next instant the sail, with half of the fished mast, was overboard, with the lugger rapidly swinging, head to sea, to the drag of the wreckage.

I was not a little startled by the sudden cracking of the mast, that was like the report of a gun, and the splash of the sail overboard, and the rapid slewing of the boat.

Helga quietly said in my ear:

"Nothing better could have happened, Hugh. We are now indeed a wreck for that ship astern to sight, and she is sure to speak us."

Abraham flung down his logbook with a sudden roaring out of I know not what 'longshore profanities, and Jacob, letting go the helm, went scrambling forward over the thwarts, heaping sea-blessings, as he sprawled, upon the eyes and limbs of the boat-builder who had supplied the lugger with spars. The three of us went to work, and Helga helped us as best she could, to get the sail in; but the sea that was now running was large compared to what it had been during the night, and the task was extraordinarily laborious and distressful. Indeed, how long it took us to drag that great lug-sail full of water over the rail was to be told by the ship astern, for when I had leisure to look for her I found her risen to her hull, and coming along, as it seemed to me, dead for us, heeling sharply away from the fresh wind, but rolling heavily too on the swell, and pitching with the regularity of a swing in motion.

Helga and I threw ourselves upon a thwart, to take breath. The boatmen stood looking at the approaching vessel.

"She'll not miss seeing us, anyway," said Abraham.

"I'm for letting the lugger loie as she is," exclaimed Jacob: "they'll see the mess we're in, and back their taws'l."

"You will signal to her, I hope?" said I.

"Ay," answered Abraham; "we'll gi' 'em a flourish of the Jack presently, though there'll be little need, for if our condition ain't going to stop 'em there's 'nothen' in a color to do it."

"Abraham," said I, "you and Jacob will not, I am sure, think us ungrateful if I say that I have made up my mind—and I am sure Miss Nielsen will agree—that I have made up my mind, Abraham, to leave your lugger for that ship, outward-bound as I can see she is, if she will receive us."

"Well, sir," answered Abraham, mildly, "you and the lady are your own masters, and, of course, you'll do as you please."

"It is no longer right," I continued, "that we should go on in this fashion, eating you out of your little floating house and home; nor is it reasonable that we should keep you deprived of the comfort of your fore-peak. We owe you our lives, and, God knows, we are grateful! But our gratitude must not take the form of compelling you to go on maintaining us."

Abraham took a slow look at the ship.

"Well, sir," said he, "down to this hour the odds have been so heavy agin your exchanging this craft for a homeward-bounder that I really haven't the heart to recommend ye to wait a little longer. It's but an oncomfortable life for the likes of you and the lady—she having to loie in a little bit of a coal-black room, forrads, as may be all very good for us men, but werry bad and hard for her; and you having to tarn in under that there opening, into which there's no vartue in sail-cloth to keep the draughts from blowing. I dorn't doubt ye'll be happier aboard a craft where you'll have room to stretch your legs in, a proper table to sit down to for your meals, and a cabin where you'll loie snug. 'Sides, tain't, after all, as if she wasn't a-going to give ye the same chances of getting home as the 'Airly Marn' dew. Only hope she'll receive ye."

"Bound to do it," rumbled Jacob, "if so be as he cap'n's a *man*."

I turned to Helga.

"Do I decide wisely?"

"Yes, Hugh," she answered. "I hate to think of you lying in that cold space there throughout the nights. The two poor fellows," she added, softly, "are generous, kind, large-hearted men, and I shrink from the thought of the mad adventure they have engaged in. But," said she, with a little

smile and a faint touch of color in her cheeks, as though she spoke reluctantly, "the 'Early Morn' is very uncomfortable, Hugh."

"All we have now to pray for is that the captain of that vessel will take us on board," said I, fixing my eyes on the ship, that was yet too distant for the naked sight to make anything of. "I suppose, Abraham," I spoke out, turning to the man, "that you will request them to give you a boom for a spare mast?"

"Vy, ask yourself the question, sir," he answered.

"But suppose they have no spare booms, and are unable to accommodate you?"

"Then," said he, "we must up with that there stick," pointing with his square thumb to the mast that had carried away on the previous night, "and blow along till we meets with something that will accommodate us."

"But, honestly, men—are you in earnest in your resolution to pursue this voyage to Australia? You two—the crew now half the working strength you started with—a big boat of eighteen tons to handle, and—"

I was on the point of referring to the slenderness of his skill as a navigator, but, happily, snapped my lips in time to silence the words.

Abraham eyed me a moment, then gave me a huge, emphatic nod, and, without remark, turned his back upon me in 'longshore fashion, and leisurely looked around the ocean line.

"Men," said I, "that ship may take us aboard, and in the bustle I may miss the chance of saying what is in my mind. My name is Hugh Tregarthen, as you know, and I live at Tintrenale, which you have likewise heard me say. I came away from home in a hurry to get alongside the ship that this brave girl's father commanded; and as I was then so am I now, without a single article of value upon me worthy of your acceptance; for, as to my watch, it was my father's, and I must keep it. But if it should please God, men, to bring us all safely to England again, then, no matter when you two may return, whether in twelve months hence or twelve years hence, you will find set apart for you, at a little bank in Tintrenale, a sum of fifty pounds—which you will take as signifying twenty-five pounds from Miss Helga Nielsen, and twenty-five pounds from me."

"We thank you koindly, sir," said Jacob.

"Let us get home, first," said Abraham; "yet, I thank ye koindly tew, Mr. Tregarthen," he added, rounding upon me again and extending his rough hand.

I grasped and held it with eyes suffused by the emotion of gratitude which possessed me: then Jacob shook hands with me, and then the poor fellows shook hands with Helga, whose breath I could hear battling with a sob in her throat as she thanked them for her life and for their goodness to her.

But every minute was bringing the ship closer, and now I could think of nothing else. Would she back her topsail and come to a stand? Would she at any moment shift her helm and give us a wide berth? Would she, if she came to a halt, receive Helga and me? These were considerations to excite a passion of anxiety in me. Helga's eyes, with a clear blue gleam in them, were fixed upon the oncoming vessel; but the agitation, the hurry of emotions in her little heart, showed in the trembling of her nostrils and the contraction of her white brow, where a few threads of her pale-gold hair were blowing.

Jacob pulled the Jack out of the locker, and attached it to the long staff or pole, and fell to waving it as before when the Hamburger hove into view. The ship came along slowly, but without deviating by a hair's-breadth from her course, that was on a straight line with the lugger. She was still dim in the blue, windy air, but determinable to a certain extent, and now with the naked vision I could distinguish her as a bark or ship of about the size of the "Anine," her hull black and a row of painted ports running along either side. She sat somewhat high upon the water, as though she were half empty or her cargo very light goods; but she was neat aloft—different, indeed, from the Hamburger. Her royals were stowed in streaks of snow upon their yards, but the rest of her canvas was spread, and it showed in soft, fair bosoms of white, and the cloths carried, indeed, an almost yacht-like brilliance as they steadily swung against the steely gray of the atmosphere of the horizon. The ship pitched somewhat heavily as she came, and the foam rose in milky clouds to the hawse-pipes with the regular alternation of the lifting out of the round, wet, black bows, and a flash of sunshine off the streaming timbers. From time to time Jacob flourished his flagstaff, all of us, meanwhile, waiting and watching in silence. Presently, Abraham put his little telescope to his eye, and, after a pause, said:

"She means to heave to."

"How can you tell?" I cried.

"I can see some figures a-standing by the weather main-braces," said he; "and every now and again there's a chap, aft, bending his body over the rail to have a look at us."

His 'longshore observation proved correct. Indeed, your

Deal boatman can interpret the intentions of a ship as you are able to read the passions in the human face. When she was within a few of her own lengths of us, the main-sail having previously been hauled up, the yards on the mainmast were swung, and the vessel's way arrested. Her impulse, which appeared to have been very nicely calculated, brought her surging, foaming, and rolling to almost abreast of us, within reach of the fling of a line before she came to a dead stand. I instantly took notice of a crowd of chocolate-visaged men standing on the forecastle, staring at us, with a white man on the cathead, and a man aft on the poop, with a white wide-awake and long yellow whiskers.

"Bark ahoy!" bawled Abraham, for the vessel proved to be of that rig, though it was not to have been told by us as she approached head on.

"Halloo!" shouted the man in the white wideawake.

"For God's sake, sir," shouted Abraham, "heave us a line, that we may haul alongside! We're in great distress, and there's a couple of parties here as wants to get aboard ye."

"Heave them a line!" shouted the fellow aft, sending his voice to the forecastle.

"Look out for it!" bawled the white man on the heel of the cathead within the rail.

A line lay ready as though our want had been foreseen: with sailorly celerity the white man gathered it into fakes, and in a few moments the coils were flying through the air. Jacob caught the rope with the unerring clutch of a boatman, and the three of us, stretching our backs at it, swung the lugger to the vessel's quarter.

"What is it you want?" cried the long-whiskered man, looking down at us over the rail.

"We'll come aboard and tell you, sir," answered Abraham.

"Jacob, you mind the lugger! Now, Mr. Tregarthen, watch your chance and jump into them channels" (meaning the mizzen-chains), "and I'll stand by to help the lady up to your hands. Ye'll want narve, miss! Can ye do it?"

Helga smiled as she answered:

"I will go first if you like."

I jumped on to a thwart, planting one foot on the gunwale in readiness. The rolling of the two craft, complicated, so to speak, by the swift jumps of the lugger as compared with the slow stoops of the bark, made the task of boarding ticklish even to me, who had had some experience of gaining the decks of ships in heavy weather. I waited. Up swung the boat, and over came the leaning side of the bark; then I sprung,

and successfully, and, instantly turning, waited to catch hold of Helga.

Abraham took her under the arms as though to lift her toward me when the opportunity came.

"I can manage alone—I shall be safer alone!" she exclaimed, giving him a smile and then setting her lips.

She did as I had done—stood on a thwart, securely planting one foot on the gunwale; and even in such a moment as that I could find mind enough to admire the beauty of her figure and the charming grace of her posture as her form floated perpendicularly upon the staggering motions of the lugger.

"Now, Hugh!" she cried, as her outstretched hands were borne up to the level of mine. I caught her. She sprung, and was at my side in a breath.

"Nobly done, Helga," said I; "now over the rail with us."

She stopped to call Abraham with a voice in which I could trace no hurry of breathing:

"Will you please hand me up my little parcel?"

This was done, and a minute later we had gained the poop of the bark.

The man with the long whiskers advanced to the break of the short poop or upper deck as Helga and I ascended the ladder that led to it. He seized the brim of his hat, and, without lifting it, bowed his head as though to the tug he gave, and said with a slightly nasal accent by no means Yankee, but of the kind that is common to the denomination of "tub-thumpers":

"I suppose you are the two distressed parties the sailor in the lugger called out about?"

"We are, sir," said I. "May I take it that you are the captain of this bark?"

"You may," he responded, with his eyes fixed on Helga. "Captain Joppa Bunting, master of the bark 'Light of the World,' from the River Thames for Table Bay, with a small cargo and for orders. That gives you everything, sir," said he.

He pulled at his long whiskers with a complacent smile, now contemplating me and now Helga.

"Captain Bunting," said I, "this lady and myself are shipwrecked people, very eager indeed to get home. We have met with some hard adventures, and this lady, the daughter of the master of the bark 'Anine,' has not only undergone the miseries of shipwreck, the hardships of a raft, and some days of wretchedness aboard that open boat alongside: she has been afflicted, besides, by the death of her father."

"Very sorry, indeed, to hear it, miss," said the captain; "but let this be your consolation, that every man's earthly father is bound to die at some time or other, but man's Heavenly Father remains with him forever."

Helga bowed her head. Language of this kind in the mouth of a plain sea captain comforted me greatly as a warrant of good-will and help.

"I'm sure," said I, "I may count upon your kindness to receive this lady and me and put us aboard the first homeward-bound ship that we may encounter."

"Why, of course, it is my duty as a Christian man," he answered, "to be of service to all sorrowing persons that I may happen to fall in with. A Deal lugger—as I may presume your little ship to be—is no fit abode for a young lady of sweet-and-twenty—"

He was about to add something, but at that moment Abraham came up the ladder, followed by the white man whom I had noticed standing on the forecastle.

"What can I do for you, my man?" said the captain, turning to Abraham.

"Whoy, sir, it's loike this—" began Abraham.

"He wants us to give him a spare boom to serve as a mast, sir," clipped in the other, who, as I presently got to know, was the first mate of the vessel—a sandy-haired, pale-faced man, with the lightest-blue eyes I had ever seen, a little pimple of a nose, which the sun had caught, and which glowed red, in violent contrast with his veal-colored cheeks. He was dressed in a plain suit of pilot cloth, with a shovel-peaked cap; but the old pair of carpet slippers he wore gave him a down-at-heels look.

"A spare boom!" cried the captain. "That's a big order, my lad. Why, the sight of your boat made me think I hadn't got rid of the Downs yet! There's no hoveling to be done down here, is there?"

"They're carrying out the boat to Australia, sir!" said the mate.

The captain looked hard at Abraham.

"For a consideration, I suppose?" said he.

"Ay, sir, for a consideration, as you say," responded Abraham, grinning broadly, and clearly very much gratified by the captain's reception of him.

"Then," said the captain, pulling down his whiskers and smiling with an expression of self-complacency not to be conveyed in words, "I do not for a moment doubt that you are carrying that lugger to Australia, for my opinion of the Deal

boatmen is this: that for a consideration they would carry their immortal souls to the gates of the devil's palace, and then return to their public-houses, get drunk on the money they had received, and roll about bragging how they had bested Old Nick himself! Spare boom for a mast, eh?" he continued, peering into Abraham's face. "What's your name, my man?"

"Abraham Vise," answered the boatman, apparently too much astonished as yet to be angry.

"Well, see here, friend Abraham," said the captain, turning up his eyes and blandly pointing aloft, "my ship isn't a forest, and spare booms don't grow aboard us. And yet," said he, once again peering closely into Abraham's face, "you're evidently a fellow-Christian in distress, and it's my duty to help you! I suppose you are a Christian?"

"Born one!" answered Abraham.

"Then, Mr. Jones," exclaimed the captain, "go round the ship with friend Abraham Vise, and see what's to be come at in the shape of a spare boom. Off with you now! Time's time on the ocean, and I can't keep my tops'l aback all day."

The two men went off the poop. The captain asked me my name, then inquired Helga's and said: "Mr. Tregarthen, and you, Miss Nielsen, I will ask you to step below. I have a drop of wine in my cabin, and a glass of it can hurt neither of you. Come along if you please," and so saying he led the way to a little companion-hatch, down which he bundled, with Helga and myself in his wake; and I recollect, as I turned to put my foot upon the first of the steps, that I took notice (with a sort of wonder in me that passed through my mind with the velocity of thought) of the lemon-colored face of a man standing at the wheel, with such a scowl upon his brow, that looked to be withered by the sun to the aspect of the rind of a rotten orange, and with such a fierce, glaring expression in his dusky eyes, the pupils of which lay like a drop of ink slowly filtering out upon a slip of colored blotting-paper, that but for the hurry I was in to follow the captain I must have lingered to glance again and yet again at the strange, fierce, forbidding creature.

We entered a plain little state-cabin, or living-room, filled with the furniture that is commonly to be seen in craft of this sort—a table, lockers, two or three chairs, a swinging tray, a lamp, and the like. The captain asked us to sit, and disappeared in a berth forward of the state-cabin; but he returned too speedily to suffer Helga and me to exchange words. He put a bottle of Marsala upon the table, took the wine-

glasses from a rack affixed to a beam, and produced from a side-locker a plate of mixed biscuits. He filled the glasses, and, with his singular smile and equally curious bow, drank our healths, adding that he hoped to have the pleasure of speedily transshiping us.

He had removed his wideawake hat, and there was nothing, for the moment, to distract me from a swift but comprehensive survey of him. He had a long hooked nose, small, restless eyes, and hair so plentiful that it curled upon his back. His cheeks were perfectly colorless, and of an unwholesome dinginess, and hung very fat behind his long whiskers, and I found him remarkable for the appearance of his mouth, the upper lip of which was as thick as the lower. He might have passed very well for a London tradesman—a man who had become almost bloodless through long years of serving behind a counter in a dark shop. He had nothing whatever of the sailor in his aspect—I do not mean the theatrical sailor, our old friend of the purple nose and grog-blossomed skin, but of that ordinary every-day mariner whom one may meet with in thousands in the docks of Great Britain. But that, however, which I seemed to find most remarkable in him was his smile. It was the haunting of his countenance by the very specter of mirth. There was no life, no sincerity in it. Nevertheless, it caused a perpetual play of features more or less defined, informed by an expression which made one instantly perceive that Captain Joppa Bunting had the highest possible opinion of himself.

He asked me for my story, and I gave it him, he, meanwhile, listening to me with his singular smile, and his eyes almost embarrassingly rooted upon my face.

"Ah!" cried he, fetching a deep sigh, "a noble cause is the life-boat service. Heaven bless its sublime efforts! and it is gratifying to know that her majesty the queen is a patron of the institution. Mr. Tregarthen, your conscience should be very acceptable to you, sir, when you come to consider that but for you this charming young lady must have perished"—he motioned toward Helga with an ungainly inclination of his body.

"I think, captain," said I, "you must put it the other way about—I mean, that but for Miss Nielsen I must have perished."

"Nielsen—Nielsen," said he, repeating the words. "That is not an English name, is it?"

"Captain Nielsen was a Dane," said I.

"But you are not a Dane, madame?" he exclaimed.

"My mother was English," she answered, "but I am a Dane, nevertheless."

"What is the religion of the Danes?" he asked.

"We are a Protestant people," she answered, while I stared at the man, wondering whether he was perfectly sound in his head, for nothing could seem more malapropos at such a time as this than his questions about, and his references to, religion.

"What is your denomination, madame?" he asked, smiling, with a drag at one long whisker.

"I thought I had made you understand that I was a Protestant," she answered, with an instant's petulance.

"There are many sorts of Protestants!" he exclaimed.

"Have not you a black crew?" said I, anxious to change the subject, sending a glance in search of Abraham through the window of the little door that led on to the quarter-deck, and that was framed on either hand by a berth or sleeping-room, from one of which the captain had brought the wine.

"Yes, my crew are black," said he; "black here"—he touched his face—"and, I fear, black here"—he put his hand upon his heart. "But I have some hope of beating out one superstition from them before we let go our anchor in Table Bay!"

As he said these words a sudden violent shock was to be felt in the cabin, as though, indeed, the ship, as she dropped her stern into the trough, had struck the ground. All this time the vessel had been rolling and plunging somewhat heavily as she lay with her topsail to the mast in the very swing of the sea; but, after the uneasy feverish friskings of the lugger, the motion was so long-drawn, so easy, so comfortable, in a word, that I had sat and talked scarcely sensible of it. But the sudden shock could not have been more startling, more seemingly violent, had a big ship driven into us. A loud cry followed. Captain Bunting sprung to his feet; at the same moment there was a hurried tramp and rush of footsteps overhead, and more cries. Captain Bunting ran to the companion-steps, up which he hopped with incredible alacrity.

"I fear the lugger has been driven against the vessel's side!" said Helga.

"Oh, Heaven, yes!" I cried. "But I trust, for the poor fellows' sake, she is not injured. Let us go on deck!"

We ran up the steps, and the very first object I saw as I passed through the hatch was Jacob's face, purple with the toil of climbing, rising over the rail on the quarter. Abraham

and two or three colored men grasped the poor fellow, and over he floundered on to the deck streaming wet.

Helga and I ran to the side to see what had happened. There was no need to look long. Directly under the ship's quarter lay the lugger with the water sluicing into her. The whole of one side of her was crushed as though an army of workmen had been hammering at her with choppers. We had scarcely time to glance before she was gone! a sea foamed over and filled her out of hand, and down she went like a stone, with a snap of the line that held her as though it had been thread, to the lift of the bark from the drowning fabric.

"Gone!" cried I. "Heaven preserve us! What will our poor friends do?"

Captain Bunting was roaring out in true sea-fashion. He might continue to smile, indeed; but his voice had lost its nasal twang.

"How did this happen?" he bawled. "Why on earth wasn't the lugger kept fended off? Mr. Jones, jump into that quarter-boat and see if we've received any injury."

The mate hopped into the boat, and craned over.

"It seems all right with us, sir!" he cried.

"Well, then, how did this happen?" exclaimed the captain, addressing Jacob, who stood, the very picture of distress and dejection, with the water running away upon the deck from his feet, and draining from his finger-ends as his arms hung up and down as though he stood in a shower-bath.

"I'd gone forward," answered the poor fellow, "to slacken away the line that the lugger might drop clear, and then it happened, and that's all I know;" and here he slowly turned his half-drowned bewildered face upon Abraham, who was staring over the rail down upon the sea where the lugger had sunk, as though rendered motionless by a stroke of paralysis.

"Well, and what'll you do now?" cried Captain Bunting.

"Do? Whoy, chuck myself overboard!" shouted Jacob, apparently quickened into his old vitality by the anguish of sudden realization.

"Shocking!" cried Captain Bunting. "I shall have to talk apart with you, my man."

Here Abraham slowly looked round, and then turned and lay against the rail, eying us lifelessly.

CHAPTER XV.

CAPTAIN JOPPA BUNTING.

THERE were four or five colored seamen standing near looking on. Though I could not have been sure, I guessed them to be Malays by the somewhat Chinese cast of their features. I had seen such faces once before, discoloring a huddle of white countenances of European seamen looking over the side of a ship, anchored in our bay, at the life-boat I was in charge of for an hour or two of practice. I also caught the fierce lemon-colored creature at the wheel following the captain, as he moved about, with his stealthy dusky eyes; but more than this I had not time to take notice of.

"Abraham," I exclaimed, approaching him, "this is a bad business."

"Ay," he muttered, drying his lips upon his knuckles. "There's nothen to do now but to get home again. I laid out fifteen pounds for myself on this here job, an' it's gone, and gone's too the money we was to take up. Oh, Jacob, matey! how came it about—how came it about?" he cried, in a voice of bitter grief that was without the least hint of temper or reproach.

"Ye've heard, Abraham," answered the other, speaking brokenly. "Gord He knows how it happened. I'd ha' given ten toimes ower the money we was to airn that this here mucking job had been your'n instead o' mine, that I might feel as sorry for ye, Abey, as ye are for me, mate."

"Is she clean gone?" cried Captain Bunting, looking over the quarter. "Yes, clean. Nothing but her boat floating, and a few spars. It is spilled milk, and not to be recovered by tears. You two men will have to go along with us till we can send the four of you home. Mr. Jones, fill on your topsail, if you please. Hi! you Pallunappacheley, swab up that wet there, d'ye hear? Now Moona, now Yong Soon Wat, and you, Shayoo Saibo—maintopsail-brace, and bear a hand!"

While the topsail-yard was in the act of swinging I observed that Abraham's countenance suddenly changed. A fit of temper, resembling his outbreak when the Hamburger had passed us, darkened his face. He rolled his eyes fiercely, then, plucking off his cap, flung it savagely down upon the deck, and, while he tumbled and sprawled about in a sort of mad dance, he bawled at the top of his voice:

"I says it can't be true! What I says is, it's a dream—a

blooming, measly dream! The 'Airly Marn' foundered!" Here he gave his cap a kick that sent it flying the length of the poop. "It's a loie, I says. It was to ha' been seventy-foive pound a man, and there was two gone, whose shares would ha' been our'n. And where's moy fifteen pound vorth o' goods? Cuss the hour, I says, that ever we fell in with this bark!"

He raved in this fashion for some minutes, the captain meanwhile eying him with his head on one side, as though striving to find out whether he was drunk or mad. He then rushed to the side with an impetuosity that made me fear he meant to spring overboard, and, looking down for a moment, he bellowed forth, shaking his clinched fist at the sea:

"Yes, then she is gone, and 'tain't a dream!"

He fetched his thigh a mighty slap, and, wheeling round, stared at us in the manner of one temporarily bereft of his senses by the apparition of something he finds horrible.

"Those Deal boatmen have excitable natures!" said Captain Joppa Bunting, addressing me, fixedly smiling and passing his fingers through a whisker as he spoke.

"I trust you will bear with the poor fellows," said I; "it is a heavy loss to the men, and a death-blow to big expectations."

"Temper is excusable occasionally at sea," observed the captain; "but language I never permit. Yet that unhappy Christian soul ought to be borne with, as you say, seeing that he is a poor ignorant man very sorely tried. Abraham Vise, come here!" he called.

"His name is Wise," said I.

"Wise, come here!" he shouted.

Abraham approached us with a slow, rolling gait, and a face in which temper was now somewhat clouded by bewilderment.

"Abraham," said the captain, looking from him to Jacob, who leaned, wet through, against the rail, with a dogged face and his eyes rooted upon the deck, "you have met with one of those severe reverses which happen entirely for the good of the sufferer, however he may object to take that view. Depend upon it, my man, that the loss of your lugger is for some wise purpose."

Abraham looked at him with an eye whose gaze delivered the word damn as articulately as ever lips could have uttered the expletive.

"You two men were going in that small open boat to Australia," continued the captain, with a paternal air and a nasal

voice, and smiling always. "Do you suppose you would ever have reached that distant coast?"

"Sartainly I dew, sir," cried Abraham, hoarsely, with a vehement nod.

"I say no, then!" thundered the captain. "Two of you! Why, I've fallen in with smaller luggers than yours cruising in the channel with eight of a crew."

"Ay!" shouted Abraham. "And vy? Only ask yourself the question! 'Cause they carry men to ship as pilots. But tew can handle a lugger."

"I say no!" thundered the captain again. "What? All the way from the Chops to Sydney Bay? Who's your navigator?"

"Oy am," answered Abraham.

The captain curved his odd, double-lipped mouth into a sneer, that yet somehow did not disugise or alter his habitual or congenital smile, while he ran his eye over the boatsman's figure.

"You!" he cried, pausing and bursting in to a loud laugh; then, resuming his nasal intonation, he continued. "Mark you this now. The loss of your lugger alongside my bark is a miracle wrought by a bountiful Heaven to extend your existence, which you were deliberately attempting to cut short by a dreadful act of folly, so dreadful that had you perished by a like behavior ashore you would have been buried with a stake through your middle!"

He turned up his eyes till little more than the whites of them were visible. Grieved as I was for poor Abraham, I scarcely saved myself from bursting out laughing, so ludicrous was the shifting emotions which worked in his face, and so absurd Jacob's fixed stare of astonishment and wrath.

"Now men," continued the captain, "you can go forward. What's your name?"

"Jacob Minnikin, sir," answered the boatman, speaking thickly and with difficulty.

"Get you to the galley, Jacob Minnikin," said the captain, "and dry your clothes. The chief mate will show you where to find a couple of spare bunks in the forecastle. Go and warm yourselves and get something to eat. You'll be willing to work, I hope, in return for my keeping you until I can send you home?"

Abraham sullenly mumbled, "Yes, sir."

"All right. We may not be long together; but while I have you I shall be thankful for you. We are a black crew,

and the sight of a couple of white faces forward will do me good. Off you go, now!"

Without another word the two men trudged off the poop; but I could hear them muttering to each other as they went down the ladder.

Some time before this they had trimmed sail, and the bark was once again clumsily breaking the seas, making a deal of noisy sputtering at her cutwater to the stoop of her apple-shaped bows, and rolling and plunging as though she were contending with the surge of Agulhas or the Horn. I sent my sight around the ocean, but there was nothing to be seen. The atmosphere had slightly thickened, and it was blowing fresh, but the wind was on the quarter, and the mate had found nothing in the weather to hinder him from showing the mainsail to it again with the port clew up. But the captain's talk prevented me from making further observations at that time.

"These two men," said, he, "have very good, honest, substantial, Scriptural names. Abraham and Jacob," he smacked his lips. "I like 'em. I consider myself fortunate in the name of Joppa," he continued, looking from me to Helga. "I might have been called Robert."

You would have thought that the smile which accompanied this speech was designed to point it as a joke, but a moment's observation assured me that it was a fixed expression.

"I have observed," he went on, "that the lower orders are very dull and tardy in arriving at an appreciation of the misfortunes which befall them. Those two men, sir, are not in the least degree grateful for the loss of their lugger, by which, as I told them, their lives have been undoubtedly preserved."

"They are poor men," said Helga, "and do not know how to be grateful for the loss of perhaps very nearly all that they have in the world."

He looked at her smilingly, with a glance down her figure, and exclaimed: "I am quite sure that when your poor dear father's bark sunk you did not resent the decree of Heaven."

Helga held her peace.

"Was she insured, madame?" he asked.

She answered briefly "Yes," not choosing to enter into explanations.

He surveyed her thoughtfully, with his head on one side; then, addressing me, he said:

"The man Abraham, now. I take it he was skipper of the lugger?"

"Yes, he was so," said I.

"Is it possible that he knows anything of navigation?"

"I fear his acquaintance with that art is small. He can blunder upon the latitude with the aid of an old quadrant, but he leaves his longitude to dead reckoning."

"And yet he was going to Australia!" cried the captain, tossing his pale, fleshy hands and upturning his eyes. "Still, he is a respectable man?"

"A large-hearted, good man," cried Helga, warmly.

He surveyed her again thoughtfully with his head on one side, slowly combing down one whisker, then addressing me:

"I am rather awkwardly situated," said he. "Mr. Ephraim Jones and myself are the only two white men aboard this vessel. Jones is an Only Mate. You know what that means?"

I shook my head in my ignorance, with a glance at Helga.

"Captain Bunting means," she answered, smiling "that Only Mate is literally the only mate that is carried in a ship."

He stared at her with lifted eyebrows, and then gave her a bow.

"Right, madame," said he. "And when you are married, dear lady, you will take all care, I trust, that your husband shall be your Only Mate."

She slightly colored, and as she swayed to the rolling deck I caught sight of her little foot petulantly beating the plank for a moment. It was clear that Captain Bunting was not going to commend himself to her admiration by his wit.

"You were talking about Abraham," said I.

"No, I was talking about Jones," he answered, "and attempting to explain the somewhat unpleasant fix I am in. The man who acted as second mate was the carpenter of the bark, a fellow named Winstanley. I fear he went mad, after we were a day out. Whether he jumped overboard or fell overboard, I can not say." He made a wild grimace, as though the recollection shocked him. "There was nothing for it but to pursue the voyage with my Only Mate; and I, of course, have to keep watch and watch with him—a very great inconvenience to me. I believe Abraham Wise—or Vise, as he calls himself—would excellently fill the post vacated by Winstanley."

"He wants to get home," said I.

"Yet I might tempt him to remain with me," said he, smiling. "There's no melody so alluring to a Deal boatman's ears as the jingling of silver dollars."

"You will find him thoroughly trustworthy," said Helga.

"We will wait a little—we will wait a little!" he exclaimed, blandly.

"Of course, Captain Bunting," said I, "your views in the

direction of Abraham will not, I am sure, hinder you from sending Miss Nielsen and myself to England at the very earliest opportunity." And I found my eye going seaward over the bark's bow as I spoke.

"The very first vessel that comes along you shall be sent aboard of, providing, to be sure, she will receive you."

I thanked him heartily, and also added, in the most delicate manner I could contrive on the instant, that all expense incurred by his keeping us should be defrayed. He flourished his fat hand.

"That is language to be addressed to the Pharisee, sir—not to the Samaritan."

All this was exceedingly gratifying. My spirits rose, and I felt in a very good humor with him. He looked at his watch.

"Five o'clock," said he. "Mr. Jones," he called to the mate, who was standing forward at the head of the little poop-ladder, "you can go below and get your supper, then relieve me. Tell Punmeamootty to put some cold beef and pickles on the table. Better let him set the ham on too, and tell the fool that it won't bite him, because it was once a pig. Punmeamootty can make some coffee, Mr. Jones; or perhaps you drink tea?" said he, turning to Helga. "Well, both, Mr. Jones, both," he shouted: "tea and coffee. Make a good meal, sir, and then come and relieve me."

The mate vanished. Captain Bunting drew back by a step or two to cast a look aloft. He then, with a sailorly eye, methought, despite his wiskers and dingy fleshy face and fixed smile, sent a searching glance to windward, following it on with a cautious survey of the horizon. He next took a peep at the compass, and said something to a mahogany-colored man who had replaced the fierce-looking fellow at the wheel. I observed that when the captain approached the man stirred uneasily in his shoes, 'twixt which and the foot of his blue dungaree breeches there lay visible the bare yellow flesh of his ankles.

I said softly and quickly to Helga, "This is a very extraordinary shipmaster."

"Something in him repels me," she answered.

"He is behaving kindly and hospitably, though."

"Yes, Hugh; still I shall be glad to leave the bark. What a very strange crew the ship carries! What are they?"

"I will ask him," said I, and at that moment he rejoined us.

"Captain," I exclaimed, "what countrymen are your sailors, pray?"

"Mostly Malays, with a few Cingalese among them," he answered. "I got them on a sudden, and was glad of them, I can tell you. I had shipped an ordinary European crew in the Thames; and in the Downs, where we lay wind-bound for three days, every man-jack of them, saving Mr. Jones and Winstanley, lowered that quarter-boat," said he, nodding to it, "one dark night, chucked their traps in, and went away for Dover round the South Foreland. I recovered the boat, and was told that there was a crew of Malays lodged at the Sailor's Home at Dover. A vessel from Ceylon that had touched at the Cape and taken in some colored seamen there had stranded, a night or two before my men ran, somewhere off the South Sand Head. She was completely wrecked, and her crew were brought to Dover. There were eleven of them in all, with a boss or bo's'n or serang, call him what you will—there he is!" He pointed to a dark-skinned fellow on the forecastle. "Well, to cut the story short, when these fellows heard I was bound to the Cape they were all eager to ship. They offered their services for very little money—very little money indeed," he added, smiling, "their object being to get home. I had no idea of being detained in the Downs for a crew, and I had no heart, believe me, to swallow another dose of the British merchant sailor, so I had them brought aboard—and there they are!" he exclaimed, gazing complacently forward and aft; "but they are black inside and out. They're Mohammedans, to a man, and now I'm sorry I shipped them, though I hope to do good—yes," said he, nodding at me, "I hope to do good."

He communicated to this final sentence all the significance that it was in the power of his countenance and manner to bestow; but what he meant I did not trouble myself to inquire. Mr. Jones remained below about ten minutes: he then arrived, and the captain, who was asking Helga questions about her father's ship, the cause of her loss, and the like, instantly broke off on seeing the mate, and asked us to follow him to the cabin.

The homely interior looked very hospitable, with its table cleanly draped and pleasantly equipped with provisions. The colored man who apparently acted as steward, and who bore the singular name of Punmeamootty, stood, a dusky shadow, near the cabin door. Spite of a smoky sunset in the western windy haze, the gloom of the evening in the east was already upon the ocean, and the cabin, as we entered it, showed somewhat darksome to the sight; yet though the figure of the Malay, as I have already said, was no more than a shadow, I could distinctly see his gleaming eyes even from the distance of the

companion steps; and I believe had it been much darker still I should have beheld his eyes looking at us from the other end of the cabin.

"Light the lamp, Punmeamootty!" said the captain. "Now, let me see," said he, throwing his wideawake on to a locker, "we call the last meal supper, at sea, Miss Nielsen."

"Yes, I know that," she answered.

"Before we go to supper," he continued, "you would like to refresh yourself in a cabin. How about accommodating you, Mr. Tregarthen? That cabin is mine," said he, pointing, "and the one facing it is Mr. Jones's. There are four gloomy little holes below, one of which was occupied by poor Winstanley, and the others, I fear, are choke-full of stores and odds and ends." He eyed her for a moment meditatively. "Come," said he; "you are a lady and must be made comfortable, however short your stay with me may be. Mr. Jones will give up his cabin, and go into the steerage!"

—"And Mr. Tregarthen?" said Helga.

"Oh, I'll set some of our darkies after supper to make ready one of the berths below for him."

"I do not wish to be separated from Mr. Tregarthen," said Helga.

Captain Bunting looked at her, then at me, then at her left hand, for the colored steward had now lighted the lamp and we were conversing close to it.

"You are Miss Nielsen?" said the captain. "Have I mistaken?"

The blood rose to the girl's cheek.

"No, you have not mistaken," said I; "Miss Nielsen and I have now for some days been fellow-sufferers, and, for acquaintance' sake, she wishes her berth to be near mine!"

This I said soothingly, for I thought the skipper's brow looked a little clouded.

"Be it so," said he, with a bland flourish of both hands: "meanwhile, madame, such conveniences as my cabin affords are at your service for immediate use."

She hesitated, but on meeting my eye seemed immediately to catch what was in my mind, and, smiling prettily, she thanked him, and went at once to his cabin.

"The fact is, sir," said he, nasally, dragging at the wristband of his shirt and looking at his nails, "man at the best, is but a very selfish animal, and cruelly neglectful of the comfort and happiness of women. Pardon my frankness: your charming companion has been exposed for several days to the horrors of what was really no better than an open boat.

What more natural than that she should wish to adjust her hair and take a peep at herself in a looking-glass? And yet"—here he smiled profoundly—"the suggestion that she should withdraw did not come from you."

"The kindness of your reception of us," I answered, "assured me that you would do everything that is necessary."

"Quite so," he answered; "and now, Mr. Tregarthen, I dare say a brush-up will comfort you too. You will find all that you require in Mr. Jones's cabin."

I thanked him, and at once entered the berth, hardly knowing as yet whether to be amused or astonished by the singular character of this long-whiskered, blandly smiling, and, as I might fairly believe, religious sea captain.

There was a little window in the berth that looked on to the quarter-deck. On peering through it I spied Abraham and Jacob with their arms buried to the elbow in their breeches pockets, leaning with dogged mien, in the true loafing, lounging, 'longshore posture against the side of the caboose or galley. The whole ship's company seemed to have gathered about them. I counted nine men. There was a rusty tinge in the atmosphere that gave me a tolerable sight of all those people. It was the first dog-watch, when the men would be free to hang about the decks and smoke and talk. The colored sailors formed a group, in that dull hectic light, to dwell upon the memory—one with a yellow sou'-wester, another with a soldier's forge-cap on his head, a third in a straw hat, along with divers scarecrow-like costumes of dungaree and coarse canvas jumpers—here a jacket resembling an evening-dress coat that had been robbed of its tails, there a pair of flapping skirts, a red wool comforter, half-wellington boots, old shoes, and I know not what besides.

The man that had been pointed out to me as "boss"—to employ Captain Bunting's term—was addressing the two boatmen as I looked. He was talking in a low voice, and not the lightest growl of his accents reached me. Now and again he would smite his hands and act as though betrayed by temper into a sudden vehement delivery, from which he swiftly recovered himself, so to speak, with an eager look aft at the poop-deck, where, I might suppose, the mate stood watching them, or where, at all events, he would certainly be walking, on the lookout. While he addressed the boatmen, the others stood doggedly looking on, all apparently intent upon the countenances of our Deal friends, whose attitude was one of contemptuous inattention.

However, by this time I had refreshed myself with a wash.

and now quitted the cabin after a slight look round, in which I took notice of the portrait of a stout lady cut out in black paper and pasted upon a white card, a telescope, a sextant-case and a little battery of pipes in a rack over the bunk.

Helga arrived, holding her sealskin hat in her hand. Her amber-colored hair—for sometimes I would think it of this hue, at others a pale gold, then a very fine delicate yellow—showed with a little roughness in it as though she were fresh from the blowing of the wind. But had she been an artist she could not have expressed more choiceness in her fashion of neglect. She had heartened and brightened greatly since our rescue from the raft, and, though there were still many traces of her grief and sufferings in her face, there was likewise the promise that she needed but a very short term of good usage from life to bloom into as sweet, modest, and gentle a maiden as a man's heart could wish to hold to itself.

The captain, motioning us to our places, took his seat at the head of the table with a large air of hospitality in his manner of drawing out his whiskers and inflating his waistcoat. The vessel creaked and groaned noisily as she pitched and rolled, so slanting the table that, but for the rough, well-used fiddles, every article upon it would have speedily tumbled on to the deck. The lamp burned brightly, and almost eclipsed the rusty complexion of daylight that lay upon the glass of the little skylight directly over our heads.

Punmeamootty waited nimbly upon us, though my immediate impression was that his alacrity was not a little animated by fear and dislike. As the captain sat smilingly recommending the ham that he was carving—dwelling much upon it, and talking of the pig as an animal on the whole more serviceable to a man than the cow—I caught the colored steward watching him as he stood some little distance away upon the skipper's left, with his dusky shining eyes in the corner of their sockets. It reminded me of the look I had observed the fierce-looking fellow at the wheel fasten upon the captain. It was as though the fellow cursed him with his dusky gaze. Yet there was nothing forbidding in his face, despite his ugliness. His skin was of the color of the yelk of an egg, and he had a coarse heavy nose, which made me suspect a Dutch hand in the man's creation. His hair was coal black, long, and lank, after the Chinese pattern. It would have been hard to guess his age from such a mask of a face as he carried; but the few bristles on his upper lip suggested youth, and I dare say I was right in thinking him about two-and-twenty.

The captain talked freely; sometimes he omitted his nasal

twang; but his conversation was threaded with pious reflections, and I took notice of a tendency in the man to sermonize, as though little in the most familiar talk could occur out of which a salutary moral was not to be squeezed. He seemed to be very well pleased to have us on board, not perhaps so much because our company was a break as because it provided him with an opportunity to philosophize, and to air his sentiments. I shall not be thought very grateful for thus speaking of a man who had rescued us from a trying and distressful situation, and who was entertaining us kindly, and, I may say, bountifully; but my desire is to give you the truth—to describe exactly as best I can what I saw and suffered in this strange passage of my life, and the portrait I am attempting of Captain Joppa Bunting is as the eyes of my head, and of my mind too, beheld him.

As I looked at him sitting at the table, of a veal-like complexion in that light, blandly gesticulating with his fat hands, expressing himself with a nasal gravity that was at times diverting with the smile that accompanied it, it seemed difficult to believe that he was a merchant captain, the master of as commonplace an old ocean wagon as ever crushed a sea with a round bow. I asked him how long he had followed the life, and he astonished me by answering that he was now forty-four, and that he had been apprenticed to the sea at the age of twelve.

"You will have seen a very great deal in that time, captain?" said I.

"I believe there is no wonder of the Lord visible upon the face of the deep which I have not viewed," he responded. "There is no part of the world which I have not visited. I have coasted the Antarctic zone of ice in a whaler, and I have been becalmed for seventeen weeks right off, with thirty miles of motion only in those seventeen weeks, upon the parallel of one degree north."

On this I observed that Helga eyed him with interest, yet I seemed to be sensible, too, of an expression of recoil in her face, if I may thus express what I do not know how better to define.

"You have worn wonderfully well," said I.

"I have taken care of myself," he answered, smiling.

"Is this your ship, sir?"

"I have a large interest in her," he replied. "I am very well content to follow the sea. The sense of being watched over is comforting, and often exhilarating; but I wish," he exclaimed, with a solemn wagging of his head, "that the

obligation to make money in this life was less, much less, than it is."

"It is the only life in which we shall require money," said Helga.

"True, madame," said he, with an apparently careless but puzzling glance at her; "but let me tell you that the obligation of money-making soils the soul. I am not surprised that the godliest of the good men of old took up their abode in caves, were satisfied with roots for dinner, and were as happy in a sheep's-skin as a dandy in a costume by Poole. I defy a man to practice virtue and make money too. Punmeamootty, put some wine into the lady's glass."

Helga declined. The Malay was moving swiftly to execute the order, but stopped dead on her saying no, and with insensible and mouse-like movements regained his former post, where he stood watching the captain as before.

"Yes," said I, "this world would be a pleasant one if we could manage without money."

"For myself," said he, casting his eyes over the table, "I could do very well with a crust of bread and a glass of water; but I have a daughter, Judith Ruby, and I have to work for her."

This brought a little expression of sympathy into Helga's face.

"Is she your only daughter, Captain Bunting?" she asked.

"My only daughter," he answered, with a momentary softening of his voice. "I wish I had her here!" said he. "You would find her, Miss Nielsen, a good, kind, religious girl. She is lonely in her home when I am away. I am a widower. My dear wife fell asleep six years ago."

He sighed, but he was smiling too as he did so.

The windows of the skylight had now turned into gleaming ebony against the darkness of the evening outside, and reflected the white table-cloth and the sparkling glass and our figures as though it were a black polished mirror over our heads. I had taken notice of a sharper inclination in the heel of the bark when she rolled to leeward, and, though I was no sailor, yet my ears, accustomed to the noises of the coast, had caught a keener edge in the hum of the wind outside, a more fretful hissing in the stroke of every sea smiting the bends. An order was delivered from the deck above us, and, shortly afterward, a singular sound of howling arose, accompanied with the slatting and flapping of canvas.

"Mr. Jones is taking the mainsail off her," said the captain,

"but the glass is very steady. We shall have a fine night," he added, smiling at Helga.

"Is that strange wailing noise made by the crew?" she asked.

"It is, madame. The Malays are scarcely to be called nightingales. They are pulling at the ropes, and they sing as they pull. It is a habit among sailors—but you do not require me to tell you that."

"I believe there is very little in seamanship, Captain Bunting," said I, "that even you, with your long experience, could teach Miss Nielsen."

She looked somewhat wistfully at me, as though she would discourage any references to her.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed. "I should like to hear your nautical accomplishments."

"It was my humor to assist my father when at sea," she said, with her eyes fixed on the table.

"Now, what can you do?" said he, watching her. "Pray tell me? A knowledge of the sea among your sex is so rare that a sailor could never value it too greatly in a lady."

"Let me answer for Miss Nielsen, captain," I exclaimed, carelessly, with a glance at the Malay steward, whose gaze, like the captain's, was also directed at Helga. "She can put a ship about, she can steer, she can loose a jib, and run aloft as nimbly as the smartest sailor; she can stand a watch and work a ship in it, and she can take sights and give you a vessel's place on the chart—within a mile shall I say, Helga?"

He looked at me on my pronouncing the word Helga. I do not know that I had before called the girl thus familiarly in his presence.

"You are joking, Mr. Tregarthen!" said he.

A little smile of appeal to me parted Helga's lips.

"No, no," said I, "I am not joking. It is all true. She is the most heroic of girls, besides. We owe our preservation to her courage and knowledge. Helga, may God bless you, and grant us a safe and speedy return to a home, where, if the dear heart in it is still beating, we shall meet with a sweet welcome, be sure."

"But you must not be in a hurry to return home," exclaimed the captain, turning his smiling countenance to Helga; "you must give me time to tempt you to remain on board 'The Light of the World.' Your qualifications as a sailor should make you an excellent mate, and you will tell me how much a month you will take to serve in that capacity?"

I observed the same look of recoil in her face that I had

before seen in it. A woman's instincts, thought I, are often amazingly keen in the interpretation of men's minds. Or is she merely nervous and sensitive, with a gentle pretty modesty and bashfulness which render direct allusions to her after this pattern distressing? For my part, I could find no more than what the French call badinage in the captain's speech, with nothing to render it significant outside the bare meaning of the words in his looks or manner.

She did not answer him, and by way of changing the subject, being also weary of sitting at the table, for we had finished the meal some time, though the Malay continued to look on, as though waiting for the order to clear away, I pulled out my watch.

"A quarter to seven," I exclaimed. "You will not wish to be late to-night, Helga. You require a good long sleep. By this time to-morrow we may have shifted our quarters; but we shall always gratefully remember Captain Bunting's goodness."

"That reminds me," said he, "your cabins must be got ready. Punmeamootty, go forward and tell Nakier to send a couple of hands aft to clear out two of the berths below. No! tell Nakier I want him, and then come aft and clear the table."

The man, gliding softly, but moving swiftly, passed through the door that led on to the quarter-deck.

"I wish I could tempt you, Miss Nielsen," continued the captain, "to take Mr. Jones's cabin. You will be so very much more comfortable there."

"I would rathere be near Mr. Tregarthen, thank you," she answered.

"You are a fortunate man to be so favored!" he exclaimed, smiling at me. "However, every convenience that my cabin can supply shall be placed at Miss Nielsen's disposal. Alas! now, if my dear Judith were here! She would improve, by many womanly suggestions, my humble attempts as a Samaritan. Our proper business in this world, Mr. Tregarthen, is to do good to one another. But the difficulty," he exclaimed with a sweep of his hand, "is to do all the good that can be done! Now, for instance, I am at a loss. How am I to supply Miss Nielsen's needs?"

"They are of the simplest—are they not, Helga?" said I.

"Quite the simplest, Captain Bunting," she answered, and then, looking at him anxiously, she added: "My one great desire now is to get to England. I have been the cause of

taking Mr. Tregarthen from his mother, and I shall not feel happy until they are together again!"

"Charity forbid," exclaimed the captain, "that I should question for an instant the heroism of Mr. Tregarthen's behavior! But," said he, slightly lowering his voice and stooping his smiling face at her, so to say, "when your brave friend put off in the life-boat he did not, I may take it, know that you were on board?"

"But I was on board," she answered, quickly; "and he has saved my life, and I wish him to return to his mother, who may believe him drowned, and be mourning him as dead!"

CHAPTER XVI.

ON BOARD "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."

At that moment the man whom the captain styled Nakier entered the little cuddy, followed by the steward. He made a singular gesture, a sort of salaam, bowing his head and whipping both hands to his brow, but with something of defiance in the celerity of the gesture. He was the man whom I had seen haranguing the two boatmen. He had a large, fine intelligent eye, liquid and luminous, despite the Asiatic duskiness of its pupil; his features were regular and almost handsome: an aquiline nose, thin and well chiseled at the nostrils, a square brow, small ears decorated with thick gold hoops, and teeth as though formed of china. The expression of his face was mild and even prepossessing, his complexion a light yellow. He bore in his hand what had apparently been a soldier's foraging cap, and was dressed in an old pilot jacket, a red shirt, and a pair of canvas breeches held by a belt, to which was attached a sheath containing a knife lying tight against his hip. He took me and Helga in with a rapid roll of his handsome eyes, then looked straight at the captain in a posture of attention, with a little contraction of the brow.

"I want a couple of the berths below cleared out at once," said the captain. "Goh Syn Koh seems one of the smartest among you. Send him. Also send Mow Lauree. He can make a bed, I hope? He is making a bed for himself! Bear a hand and clear this table, Punmeamootty, so as to be able to assist. You'll superintend the work, Nakier. See all clean and comfortable."

"Ya-as, sah," said the man.

He was going.

"Stop!" exclaimed the captain, smiling all the time he continued to talk. "Did you eat your dinner to-day?"

"No, sah."

"What has become of it?"

"Overboard, sah," answered the man, preserving his slight frown.

"Overboard! As good a mess of pork and pea-soup as was ever served out to a ship's company. Overboard! That is the third time. If it happens again"—he checked himself with a glance at Helga—"if it happens again," he went on, speaking with an air of concern, "I shall be obliged to stop the beef."

"We can not eat pork, sah—we are Mussulmen—" he was proceeding.

The captain silenced him with a bland motion of the hand.

"Send the men aft, Nakier," said he, with a small increase of nasal twang in his utterance, "and see that the cleaning and the clearance out is thorough."

He gave him a hard, significant nod, and the man marched out, directing an eager look at me as he wheeled round, as though for my sympathy.

Punmeamootty was clearing the table with much ill-dissembled agitation in the hurry of his movements: his swift glances went from the captain to me, and then to Helga. They were like the flashing of a stiletto, keen as the darting blue gleam of the blade, and they would be as murderous, too, I thought, if the man could execute his wishes with his eyes. I believed the captain would now make some signal to leave the table, but he continued to sit on.

"Did you observe that man just now?" said he, addressing Helga. She answered "Yes." "Handsome, do you think?" said he, combing a whisker.

"He had a mild, pleasant face," she answered.

"His name," said he, "is Vanjoor Nakier. He is boss of the native crew, and I allow him to act as a sort of boatswain. It is hard to reconcile so agreeable a countenance with the horrible and awful belief which must make him forever and ever a lost soul, if he is not won over in plenty of time for repentance, for prayer and mortification."

"You seem to have the fellows' names very pat," said I. "Are you acquainted with the Malay tongue?"

"Ah!" cried he, with a shake of the head; "I wish I were. I might then prove a true missionary to the poor benighted fellows. Yet I shall hope to have broken heavily into their deplorable and degraded superstitions before I dismiss them at Cape Town."

I caught sight of the shadowy form of the steward lurking

abaft the companion steps, where he seemed busy with some plates and a basket.

"It is your hope," said I, "to convert the Mussulmen?"

"It is my hope, indeed," he answered; "and pray, what honester hope should possess a man?"

"It is an admirable desire," said I, "but a little dangerous perhaps."

"Why?" asked he.

"Well," said I, "I am no traveler. I have seen nothing of the world, but I have read, and I have always gathered from books of voyages, that there is no class of men more bigoted in their faith and more treacherous in their conduct than Malay seamen."

"Hush!" cried Helga, putting her finger to her lips and looking in the direction of the steward.

The captain turned in his chair.

"Are you there, Punmeamootty?"

"Yes, sah," and his figure came swiftly gliding into the light.

"Go below and help the others! They should be at work by this time."

The man went out on to the quarter-deck, where, close against the cuddy-front, lay the little hatch that conducted to the steerage.

"You are quite right," exclaimed the captain, lying back and expanding his waistcoat. "Malay seamen are, undoubtedly, treacherous. In fact, treachery is part and parcel of the Malay character. It is the people of that nation who run a-muck, you know."

"What is that?" inquired Helga.

"A fellow falls crazy," answered the captain, smiling, "whips out a weapon called a creese, and stabs and kills as many as he can encounter as he flies through the streets."

"They are a people to live on good terms with," said Helga, looking at me.

"They are a people," said the captain, nasally accentuating his words, "who are to be brought to a knowledge of the Light; and, in proportion as the effort is dangerous, so should the worker glory in his task."

He gazed at Helga, as though seeking her approval of this sentiment. But she was looking at me with an expression of anxiety in her soft blue eyes.

"I gather," said I, with curiosity stimulated by thought of the girl's and my situation aboard this homely little bark, with her singular skipper and wild, dark crew—"I gather,

Captain Bunting, from what has passed, that the blow you are now leveling at these fellows' superstitions—as you call them—is aimed at their diet?"

"Just so," he answered. "I am trying to compel them to eat pork. Who knows that before the equator be crossed I may not have excited a real love for pork among them? That would be a great work, sir. It will sap one of the most contemptible of their superstitions, and provide me with a little crevice for the insertion of the wedge of truth."

"I believe pork," said I, "is not so much a question of religion as a question of health with these poor dark creatures bred in hot latitudes."

"Pork enters largely into their faith," he answered.

"So far, you have not been very successful, I think?"

"No. You heard what Vanjoor Nakier said. The wasteful wretches have for the third time cast their allowance overboard. Only think, Miss Nielsen, of willfully throwing over the rail as much hearty excellent food—honest salt pork and very fair pea-soup—as would keep a poor family at home in dinners for a week!"

"What do they eat instead?" she asked.

"Why, on pork days, biscuit, I suppose. There is nothing else."

"You give them beef every other day?" said I.

"Beef and duff," he answered; "but I shall stop that. Famine may help me in dealing with their superstitions."

It was not for me, partaking, as Helga and I were, of this man's hospitality, using his ship, dependent upon him indeed for my speedy return home with Hegla—it was not for me, I say, at this early time at all events, to remonstrate with him, to tell him that, exalted as he might consider his motives, they were urging him into a very barbarous, cruel behavior; but, as I sat looking at him, my emotion, spite of his claims upon my kindness, was one of hearty disgust, with deeper feelings working in me besides, when I considered that, if our evil fortune forced us to remain for any length of time on board "The Light of the World," we might find his theory of conversion making his ship a theater for as bad a tragedy as was ever enacted upon the high seas.

On a sudden he looked up at a little time-piece that was ticking against a beam just over his head.

"Have you any acquaintance with the sea, Mr. Tregarthen?" he asked.

"Merely a boating acquaintance," I replied.

"Could you stand a watch?"

"I could keep a lookout," said I, a little dismayed by these questions, "but I am utterly ignorant of the handling of a ship."

He looked reflectively at Helga, then at me, pulling down first one whisker, then the other, while his thick lips lay broad in a smile under his long-hooked nose.

"Oh, well," said he, "Abraham Wise will do." He went to the cuddy door and called, "Forward there!"

"Ya-as, sah," came a thick African-like note out of the forecastle obscurity.

"Ask Abraham Wise to step aft."

He resumed his seat, and in a few minutes Abraham arrived.

Helga instantly rose and gave him her hand with a sweet cordial smile that was full of her gratification at the sight of him. For my part, it did my heart good to see him. After the tallowy countenance and odd talk of the captain and the primrose complexions and scowling glances of his Malays, there was real refreshment to the spirits to be got out of the homely English face and English 'longshore garb of the boatman, with the man's suggestions, besides, of the English Channel and of home.

"And how is Jacob?" said I.

"Oh, he's a-feeling a little better, sir. A good bit down, of course, as we both are. 'Tain't realizable even now."

"Do you refer to the loss of your lugger?" said Captain Bunting.

"Ay, sir, to the 'Airly Marn,'" answered Abraham, confronting him, and gazing at him with a steadfastness that slightly increased his squint.

"But surely, my good fellow," cried the captain, "you had plenty of time, I hope, to feel thoroughly grateful for your preservation from the dreadful fate which lay before you had Providence suffered you to continue your voyage?"

"I dunno about dreadful fate," answered Abraham: "all I can say is I should be blooming glad if that there 'Airly Marn' was afloat again, or if so be as we'd never fallen in with this here 'Light of the World.'"

"It is as I told you, you perceive," exclaimed the captain, smiling and addressing Helga and me in his blandest manner: "as we descend the social scale, recognition of signal and providential mercies grows feebler and feebler, until it dies out—possibly before it gets down to Deal boatmen. I want a word with you, Abraham Wise. But first, how have you been treated forward?"

"Oh, werry well indeed, sir," he answered. "The mate

showed us where to tarn in when the time comes round, and I dessay we'll manage to git along all right till we gets clear of ye."

"What have you had to eat?"

"The mate gave us a little bit o' pork for to be biled, but ye've got a black cook forrads as seemed to Jacob and me to take the dressing of that there meat werry ill."

The captain seemed to motion the matter aside with his hand, and said:

"My vessel is without a second mate; I mean, a man qualified to take charge of the deck when Mr. Jones and I are below. Now, I am thinking that you would do very well for that post."

"I'd rather go home, sir," said Abraham.

"Ay," said the captain, complacently surveying him, "but while you are with me, you know, you must be prepared to do your bit. I find happiness assisting a suffering man. But," added he, nasally, "in this world we must give and take. You eat my meat and sleep in what I think I may fairly term my bedroom. What pay do I exact? Simply the use of your eyes and limbs."

He glanced with a very self-satisfied expression at Helga. It seemed, indeed, that most of his talk now was at her when not directly to her. She had come round to my side of the table after leaving Abraham, and I had given her my chair and stood listening with my hand on the back of it.

"I'm quite willing to tarn to," said Abraham, "while I'm along with ye, sir. I ain't afeared of work. I don't want no man's grub nor shelter for nothen."

"Quite right," said the captain, "those are respectable sentiments. Of course, if you accepted my offer I should pay you, give you the wages that Winstanley had—four pounds a month for the round voyage."

Abraham scratched the back of his head and looked at me. This proposal evidently put a new complexion upon the matter to his mind.

"You can handle a ship, I presume?" continued the captain.

"Whoy, yes," answered Abraham, with a grin of wonder at the question; "if I ain't been piloting long enough to know that sort o' work, ye shall call me a Malay."

"I should not require a knowledge of navigation in you," said the captain.

Abraham responded with a bob of the head, then scratching at his back hair afresh, said:

"I must ask leave to tarn the matter over. I should like to talk with my mate along o' this."

"I'll put him on the articles, too, if he likes, at the current wages," said the captain. "However, think over it. You can let me know to-morrow. But I shall expect you to take charge during the middle watch."

"That I'll willingly dew, sir," answered Abraham. "But how about them Ceylon chaps and Malays forrads? Dew they understand sea tarms?"

"Perfectly well," answered the captain, "or how should I and Mr. Jones get along, think you?"

"Well," exclaimed Abraham; "I han't had much to say to 'em as yet. One chap's been talking a good deal this evening, and I allow he's got a grievance, as most sailors has. There's some sort o' difficulty: I allow it lies in the eating; but a man wants practice to follow noicely what them there sort o' colored covies has to say."

"Well," exclaimed the captain, with another bland wave of the hand in dismissal of the subject, "we understand each other, at all events, my lad."

He went to the locker from which he had extracted the biscuits, produced a bottle of rum, and filled a wine-glass.

"Neat or with water?" said he, smiling.

"I've pretty nigh had enough water for to-day, sir," answered Abraham, grinning too, and looking very well pleased at this act of attention. "Here's to you, sir, I'm sure, and wishing you a prosperous woyage. Mr. Tregarthen, your health, sir, and your'n, miss, and may ye both soon get home and find everything comfortable and roight." He drained the glass with a smack of his lips. "As pretty a little drop o' rum as I've had this many a day," said he.

"You can tell Jacob to lay aft presently," said the captain, "when the steward is at liberty, and he will give him such another dose. That will do."

Abraham knuckled his forehead, pausing to say to me in a hoarse whisper, which must have been perfectly audible to the captain, "A noice gemman, and no mistake."

"I am going below," said the captain when he was gone, "to see after your accommodation. Will you sit here," addressing Helga, "or will you go on deck for a few turns? I fear you will find the air chilly."

"I will go on deck with you, Hugh," answered Helga.

The captain ran his eye over her.

"You are without luggage," said he, "and, alas! wanting in almost everything; but if you will allow me—" he broke

off and went to his cabin, and before we could have found time to exchange a whisper, returned with a very handsome, almost new, fur coat.

"Now, Miss Nielsen," said he, "you will suffer me to wrap you in this."

"Indeed my jacket will keep me warm," she answered, with that same look of shrinking in her face I have before described.

"Nay, but wear it, Helga," said I, anxious to meet the man, at all events, half-way in his kindness. "It is a delightful coat—the very thing for the keen wind that is blowing on deck!"

Had I offered to put it on for her she would at once have consented, but I could observe the recoil in her from the garment stretched in the captain's hands, with his pale fat face smiling betwixt his long whiskers over the top of it. On a sudden, however, she turned and suffered him to put the coat on her, which he did with great ostentation of anxiety and a vast deal of smiling, and, as I could not help perceiving, with a deal more of lingering over the act than there was the least occasion for.

"Wonderfully becoming, indeed!" he exclaimed; "and now to see that your cabin is comfortable."

He passed through the door, and we mounted the companion steps.

The night was so dark that there was very little to be seen of the vessel. Her dim spaces of canvas made a mere pale whistling shadow of her as they floated, waving and bowing, in dim heaps through the obscurity. There was a frequent glancing of white water to windward and a dampness as of spray in the wind, but the little bark tossed with dry decks over the brisk Atlantic heave, crushing the water off either bow into a dull light of seething, against which, when she stooped her head, the round of the forecastle showed like a segment of the shadow in an eclipse of the moon. The haze of the cabin lamp lay about the skylight, and the figure of the mate appeared in and vanished past it with monotonous regularity as he pased the short poop. There was a haze of light, too, about the binnacle-stand, with a sort of elusive stealing into it of the outline of the man at the helm. Forward the vessel lay in blackness. It was blowing what sailors call a top-gallant breeze, with, perhaps, more weight in it even than that; but the squabness of this "Light of the World" promised great stiffness, and, though the wind had drawn

some point or so forward while we were at table, the bark rose as stiff to it as though she had been under reefed topsails.

"Will you take my arm, Helga?" said I.

"Let me first turn up the sleeves of this coat," said she.

I helped her to do this; she then put her hand under my arm, and we started to walk the lee-side of the deck as briskly as the swing of the planks would suffer. Scarcely were we in motion when the mate came down to us from the weather-side.

"Beg pardon," said he. "Won't you and the lady walk to wind'ard?"

"Oh, we shall be in your way!" I answered. "It is a cold wind."

"It is, sir."

"But it promises a fair night," said I.

"I hope so," he exclaimed. "Dirty weather don't agree with dirty skins."

He turned on his heel and resumed his post on the weather-side of the deck.

"Dirty skins mean Malays in that chief mate's nautical dictionary," said I.

"Hugh! how thankful I shall be when we are transferred to another ship!"

"Ay, indeed! but surely this is better than the lugger?"

"No! I would rather be in the lugger."

"How now, Helga?" cried I. "We are very well treated here. Surely the captain has been all hospitality. No warm-hearted host ashore could do more. Why, here is he now at this moment superintending the arrangement of our cabins below to insure our comfort!"

"I do not like him at all!" said she, in a tone which her slightly Danish accent rendered emphatic.

"I do not like his treatment of the men," said I, "but he is kind to us."

"There is an unwholesome mind in his flabby face!" she exclaimed.

I could not forbear a laugh at this strong language in the little creature.

"And then his religion!" she continued. "Does a truly pious nature talk as he does? I can understand professional religionists intruding their calling upon strangers; but I have always found sincerity in matters of opinion modest and reserved—I mean among what you call laymen. What right has this man to force upon those poor fellows forward the food that they are forbidden by their faith to eat?"

"Yes," said I; "that is a vile side of the man's nature, I must own; vile to you and me and to the poor Malays, I mean. But, surely, there must be sincerity too, or why should he bother himself?"

"It may be meanness," said she: "he wants to save his beef; meanness and that love of tyrannizing which is oftener to be found among the captains of your nation, Hugh, than mine!"

"Your nation!" said I, laughing. "I claim you for Great Britain by virtue of your English speech. No pure Dane could talk your mother's tongue as you do. Spite of what you say, though, I believe the man sincere. Would he, situated as he is—two white men to eleven yellow-skins (for we and the boatmen must count ourselves out of it)—would he, I say, dare venture to arouse the passions—the religious passions—of a set of men who hail from the most treacherous community of people in the world, if he were not governed by some dream of converting them?—a fancy that, were you to transplant it ashore, would be reckoned noble and of a scriptural and martyr-like greatness."

"That may be," she answered; "but he is going very wickedly to work, nevertheless, and it will not be his fault if those colored sailors do not dangerously mutiny long before he shall have persuaded the most timid and doubting of them that pork is good to eat."

"Yes," said I, gravely; for she spoke with a sort of impassioned seriousness that must have influenced me, even if I had not been of her mind. "I, for one, should certainly fear the worst if he persists—and I don't doubt he will persist, if Abraham and the other boatmen agree to remain with him; for then it will be four to eleven—desperate odds, indeed, though, as an Englishman, he is bound to underrate the formidableness of anything colored. However," said I, with a glance into the darkness over the side, "do not doubt that we shall be transshiped long before any trouble happens. I shall endeavor to have a talk with Abraham before he decides. What he and Jacob then do, they will do with their eyes open."

As I spoke these words the captain came up the ladder and approached us.

"Ha! Miss Nielsen," he cried, "were not you wise to put on that warm coat? All is ready below; but still let me hope that you will change your mind and occupy Mr. Jones's berth."

"Thank you; for the short time we shall remain in this ship

the cabin you have been good enough to prepare will be all I shall require," she answered.

He peered through the skylight to see the hour.

"Five minutes to eight," he exclaimed. "Mr. Jones!" The man crossed the deck. "I have arranged," said the captain, "with the Deal boatman Abraham Wise to take charge of the bark during the middle watch. It is an experiment, and I shall require to be up and down during those hours to make sure of him. Not that I distrust his capacities. Oh, dear, no! From the vicious slipping of cables, merely for sordid purposes of hoveling, to the noble art of navigating a ship in a hurricane amid the shoals of the Straits of Dover, your Deal boatman is the most expert of men. But," continued he, "since I shall have to be up and down, as I have said, during the middle watch, I will ask you to keep charge of the deck till midnight."

"Very good, sir," said the mate, who appeared to me to have been on duty ever since the hour of our coming aboard. "It will keep the round of the watches steady, sir. The port-watch comes on duty at eight bells."

"Excellent!" exclaimed the captain. "Thank you, Mr. Jones."

The mate stalked aft.

"Mr. Tregarthen," he added, "I observe that you wear a sou'-wester."

"It is the headgear I wore when I put off in the life-boat," said I, "and I am waiting to get home to exchange it."

"No need, no need!" cried he; "I have an excellent wide-awake below—not, indeed, perfectly new, but a very serviceable clinging article for ocean use—which is entirely at your service."

"You are all kindness!"

"Nay," he exclaimed in a voice of devotion, "I believe I know my duty. Shall we linger here, Miss Nielsen, or would you prefer the shelter of the cabin? At half past eight Punmeamootty will place some hot water, biscuit, and a little spirit upon the table. I fear I shall be at a loss to divert you."

"Indeed not!" exclaimed Helga.

The unconscious irony of this response must have disconcerted a less self-complacent man.

"I have a few volumes of an edifying kind, and a draught-board. My resources for amusing you, I fear, are limited to those things."

The sweep of the wind was bleaker than either of us had imagined, and, now that the captain had joined us, the deck

possessed no temptation. We followed him into the cabin, where Helga hastily removed the coat as though fearing the captain would help her. His first act was to produce the wideawake he had spoken of. This was a very great convenience to me; the sou'-wester lay hot and heavy upon my head, and the sense of its extreme unsightliness added not a little to the discomfort it caused me. He looked at my sea-boots and then at his feet, and, with his head on one side, exclaimed, in his most smiling manner, that he feared his shoes would prove too large for me, but that I was very welcome to the use of a pair of his slippers. These also I gratefully accepted, and withdrew to Mr. Jones's berth to put them on, and the comfort of being thus shod, after days of the weight and unwieldiness of my sea-boots, it would be impossible to express.

"I think we shall be able to make ourselves happy yet," said the captain. "Pray sit, Miss Nielsen. Do you smoke, Mr. Tregarthen?"

"I do, indeed," I answered, "whenever I can get the chance."

He looked at Helga, who said to me:

"Pray smoke here, Hugh, if the captain does not object. My father seldom had a pipe out of his mouth, and I was constantly in his cabin with him."

"You are truly obliging," said the captain; and going to the locker in which he kept his rum, biscuits, and the like, he took out a cigar-box, and handed me as well-flavored a Havana as ever I had smoked in my life. All this kindness and hospitality was, indeed, overwhelming, and I returned some very lively thanks, to which he listened with a smile, afterward, as his custom was, waving them aside with his hand. He next entered his cabin and returned with some half dozen books, which he put before Helga. I leaned over her shoulder to look at them, and speedily recognized "The Whole Duty of Man," "The Pilgrim's Progress," Young's "Night Thoughts," a volume by Jeremy Taylor, and the rest were of this sort of literature. Helga opened a volume and seemed to read When I turned to ask the captain a question about these books, I found him staring at her profile out of the corner of his eyes, while with his right hand he stroked his whisker meditatively.

"These are all very good books," said I, "particularly the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'"

"Yes," he answered with a sigh; "works of that kind during my long periods of loneliness upon the high seas are my only solace, and lonely I am. All ship captains are more or

less alone when engaged in their profession, but I am peculiarly so."

"I should have thought the Church, captain, would have suited you better than the sea," said I.

"Not the Church," he answered. "I am a Nonconformist, and Dissent is stamped upon a long pedigree. Pray light up, Mr. Tregarthen."

He took his seat at the head of the table, put a match to his cigar, the sight of which betwixt his thick lips considerably humanized him in my opinion, and, clasping his pale, gouty-looking hands upon the table, leaned forward, furtively eying Helga over the top of his cigar, which forked up out of his mouth like the bowsprit of a ship.

His conversation chiefly concerned himself, his past career, his antecedents, and so forth. He talked as one who wishes to stand well with his hearers. He spoke of a Lady Duckett as a connection of his on his mother's side, and I observed that he paused on pronouncing the name. He told us that his mother had come from a very ancient family that had been for centuries established in Cumberland, but he was reticent on the subject of his father. He talked much of his daughter Judith's loneliness at home, and said he grieved that she was without a companion; some one who would be equally dear to them both; and as he said this he lay back in his chair in a very amplitude of waistcoat, with his eyes fixed on the upper deck and his whole posture suggestive of pensive thought.

Well, thought I, this, to be sure, is a very strange sort of sea captain. I had met various skippers in my day, but none like this man. Even a trifling expletive would have been refreshing in his mouth. From time to time Helga glanced at him, but with an air of aversion that was not to be concealed from me, however self-complacency might blind him to it. She suddenly exclaimed, with almost startling inconsequentiality:

"You will be greatly obliging us, Captain Bunting, by giving orders to Mr. Jones or to Abraham to keep a lookout for ships sailing north during the night. We can never tell what passing vessel might not be willing to receive Mr. Tregarthen and me."

"What! In the darkness of night?" he exclaimed. "How should we signal? How would you have me convey my desire to communicate?"

"By a blue light, or by burning a port-fire," said Helga, shortly.

"Ah, I see you are a thorough sailor—you are not to be in-

structed," he cried, jocosely, wagging his whiskers at her. "Think of a young lady being acquainted with the secret of night communications at sea! I fear—I fear we shall have to wait for the daylight. But what," he exclaimed, unctuously, "is the reason of this exceeding desire to return home?"

"Oh, captain," said I, "home is home."

"And Mr. Tregarthen wishes to return to his mother," said Helga.

"But, my dear young lady, your home is not in England, is it?" he asked.

She colored, faltered, and then answered:

"My home is in Denmark."

"You have lost your poor dear father," said he, "and I think I understood you to say, Mr. Tregarthen, that Miss Nielsen's poor dear mother fell asleep some years since."

This was a guess on his part. I had no recollection whatever of having told him anything of the sort.

"I am an orphan," exclaimed Helga, with a little hint of tears in her eyes, "and—and, Captain Bunting, Mr. Tregarthen and I want to return home."

"Captain Bunting will see to that, Helga," said I, conceiving her somewhat too importunate in this direction.

She answered me with a singularly wistful, anxious look.

The conversation came to a pause through the entrance of Punmeamootty. He arrived with a tray and hot water, which he placed upon the table together with some glasses. The captain produced wine and a bottle of rum. Helga would take nothing, though no one could have been more hospitably pressing than Captain Bunting. For my part, I was glad to fill my glass, as much for the sake of the tonic of the spirit as for the desire to appear entirely sociable with this strange skipper.

"You can go forward," he exclaimed to the Malay; and the fellow went gliding on serpentine legs, as it veritably seemed to me, out through the door.

No further reference was made to the subject of our leaving the bark. The captain was giving us his experiences of the Deal boatmen, and relating an instance of heroic roguery on the part of the crew of a galley-punt, when a noise of thick, throaty, African-like yowling was heard sounding from somewhere forward, accompanied by one or two calls from the mate overhead.

"I expect Mr. Jones is taking in the foretopgallant-sail," said the captain. "Can it be necessary? I will return shortly."

And, giving Helga a convulsive bow, he pulled his wide-awake to his ears and went on deck.

"You look at me, Hugh," said Helga, fixing her artless, sweet, and modest eyes upon me, "when I speak to Captain Bunting as though I do wrong."

I answered gently:

"No. But is it not a little ungracious, Helga, to keep on expressing your anxiety to get away, in the face of all this hospitable treatment and kindly anxiety to make us comfortable and happy while we remain?"

She looked somewhat abashed.

"I wish he was not so kind," she said.

"What is your misgiving?" said I, inclining toward her to catch a better view of her face.

"I fear he will not make haste to transship us," she answered.

"But why should he want to keep us?"

She glanced at me with an instant surprise emphasized by a brief parting of her lips that was yet not a smile. She made no answer, however.

"He will not want to keep us," continued I, talking with the confidence of a young man to a girl whom he is protecting, and whose behavior assures him that she looks up to him and values his judgment. "We may prove very good company for a day or two, but the master of a vessel of this sort is a man who counts his sixpences, and he has no idea of maintaining us for a longer time than he can possibly help, depend upon it."

"I hope so," she answered.

"But you don't think so," said I, struck by her manner.

She answered by speaking of his treatment of his crew, and we were upon this subject when he descended the cabin ladder.

"A small freshening of the wind," said he, "and a trifling squall of rain." There was no need for him to tell us this, for his long whiskers sparkled with water drops, and carried evidences of a brisk shower. "The bark is now very snug, and there is nothing in sight," said he, with a sort of half-humorous reproachful significance in his way of turning to Helga.

She smiled, as though by smiling she believed I should be pleased. The captain begged her to drink a little wine and eat a biscuit, and she consented. This seemed to gratify him, and his behavior visibly warmed while he relighted his cigar, mixed himself another little dose, and resumed his chat about Deal boatmen and his experience in the Downs.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CREW OF MALAYS.

We sat chatting thus until something after nine. The comfort of this cabin after the lugger, the knowledge that Helga and I would each have a comfortable bed, comparatively speaking, to lie in, the conviction that our stay in the bark must be short, and that a very few hours might see us homeward bound, coupled with a sense of security such as never possessed me in the open lugger, not to mention the influence of my one pretty big tumbler of rum punch, had put me into a good humor.

"Is not this better than the lugger?" I said to Helga, as I motioned with my cigar round the cabin, and pointed to the slippers upon my feet. "Think of my little windy bed under that boat's deck, Helga, and recollect your black forepeak."

She seemed to acquiesce. The captain's countenance was bland with gratification.

"You tell me you have not traveled, Mr. Tregarthen?" said he.

"I have not," I replied.

"But you would like to see the world? All young men should see the world. Does not the poet tell us that home-keeping youths have ever homely wits?" and here he harangued me for a little with commonplaces on the advantages of travel; then, addressing Helga very smilingly, he said, "You have seen much of the world?"

"Not very much," she answered.

"South America?"

"I was once at Rio," she answered. "I was also at Port Royal, in Jamaica, and have accompanied my father in short voyages to one or two Portuguese and Mediterranean ports."

"Come! There is extensive observation, even in that," said he, "in one so—in one whose years are still few! Did you ever visit Table Bay?"

She answered "No." He smoked meditatively.

"Helga," said I, "you look tired. Would you like to go to your cabin?"

"I should, Hugh."

"Well, I shall be glad to turn in myself, captain. Will you forgive our early retreat?"

"By all means," he exclaimed. "Let me show you the cabins."

He went to the cuddy door and bawled for Punmeamootty. "Light a lantern," I heard him say, "and bring it aft!" After a minute or two the steward made his appearance with a lantern swinging in his hand. The captain took it from him, and we passed on to the quarter-deck where the hatch lay. After the warmth of the cuddy interior, the wind, chilled as it had been with the damp of the squall, seemed to blow with an edge of frost. The rays of the lantern danced in the blackness of the wet planks. The vessel was rolling slowly and plunging heavily, and there were many heavy, complaining, straining noises aloft amid the invisible spaces of canvas swinging though the starless gloom. The cold, bleak roar of seething waters alongside recalled the raft, and there was a sort of sobbing all along the dusk close under either line of bulwarks.

"Let me help you through this little hatch, Miss Nielsen," said the captain, dangling the lantern over it that we might see down the aperture.

If she answered him I did not hear her; she peered a moment, then put her foot over and vanished. The steps were perpendicular—pieces of wood nailed to the bulkhead—yet she had descended this up-and-down ladder in an instant, and almost as she vanished was calling to me from below to say that she was safe.

"What extraordinary nimbleness in a young lady!" cried the captain, in a voice of unaffected admiration. "What an exquisite sailor! Now, Mr. Tregarthen!"

I shuffled down, keeping a tight hold of the edge of the hatch, and felt with my feet before there was occasion to let go with my hands. There was very little to be seen of this interior by the lantern-light. It was the fore part of the steerage, so far as I could gather, with two rows of bulkheads forming a little corridor, at the extremity of which, aft, I could faintly distinguish the glimmering outlines of cases of light cargo. Forward of the hatch through which we had descended there stood a solid bulkhead, so there was nothing to be seen that way. The doors of the cabin opened out of the little corridor; they were mere pigeon-holes; but then these 'tween decks were very low, and while I stood erect I felt the crown of the wideawake I wore brushing the planks.

Never could I have imagined so much noise in a ship as was here—the squeaking, the grinding, the groaning; the jar and shock of the rudder upon its post; the thump of the seas outside, and the responsive throbbing within; the sullen, muffled

roar of the Atlantic surge washing past; all these notes were blended into such a confusion of sounds as is not to be expressed. The lantern swayed in the captain's hand, and the shadows at our feet sprung from side to side. There were shadows, too, all round about, wildly playing upon the walls and bulkheads of the vessel with a mopping and mowing of them that might have filled a lonely and unaccustomed soul down here with horrible imaginations of sea monsters and ocean specters.

"I heartily wish, Miss Nielsen," cried the captain—and, in truth, he had need to exert his voice to be audible amid that bewildering clamor—"that you had suffered me to provide you with better accommodation than this. Jones could have done very well down here. However, for to-night this will be your cabin. To-morrow I hope you will change your mind, and consent to sleep above."

So saying, he opened the foremost of the little doors on the port side. It was a mere hole indeed, yet it somehow took the civilized look of an ordinary ship's berth from the round scuttle or thickly glazed port-hole which lay in an embrasure deep enough to comfortably warrant the thickness of the vessel's side. Under this port-hole was a narrow bunk, and in it a bolster, and, as I might suppose, blankets, over which was spread a very handsome rug. I swiftly took note of one or two conveniences—a looking-glass, a wash-stand secured to the bulkhead (this piece of furniture I made no doubt had come direct from the captain's cabin), there was also a little table, and upon it a comb and brush, and on the cabin-deck was a square of carpet.

"Very poor quarters for you, Miss Nielsen," said the captain, looking round, his nose and whiskers appearing twice as long in the fluctuations of the lantern-light and his fixed smile odd beyond words, with the tumbling of the shadows over his face.

"The cabin is very comfortable, and you are very kind," exclaimed Helga.

"You are good to say so. I wish you a good-night and pleasant dreams."

He extended his hand, and held hers, I thought, rather longer than mere courtesy demanded.

"That will be your cabin, Mr. Tregarthen," said he, going to the door.

I bade Helga good-night. It was hard to interpret her looks by that light, yet I fancied she had something to say, and bent my ear to her mouth; but instead of speaking she

hurriedly passed her right hand down my sleeve, by no means caressingly, but as though she desired to cleanse or dry her fingers. I looked at her, and she turned away.

"Good-night, Helga!" said I.

"Good-night, Hugh!" she answered.

"You will find a bolt to your door, Miss Nielsen," called the captain. "Oh, by the way," he added, "I do not mean that you shall undress in the dark. There is an opening over your door; I will hang the lantern amidships here. It will shed light enough to see by, and in half an hour, if that will not be too soon, Punmeamootty will remove it. Good-night, Mr. Tregarthen!"

He left me, after hanging up the lantern by a hook fixed in a beam amidships of the corridor. I waited until his figure disappeared up the steps of the hatch, and then called to Helga. She heard me instantly, and cried, "What is it, Hugh?"

"Did you not want to say something to me just now?" I exclaimed.

She opened the door and repeated, "What is it, Hugh? I can not hear you."

"I thought you wished to speak to me just now," said I, "but were hindered by the captain's presence."

"No, I have nothing to say," she answered, looking very pale in the frolic of shadows made by the swinging lantern.

"Why did you stroke down my arm? Was it a rebuke? Have I offended you?"

"Oh, Hugh!" she cried; then exclaimed: "Could not you see what I meant? I acted what I could not speak."

"I do not understand," said I.

"I wished to wipe off the grasp of that man's hand," she exclaimed.

"Poor wretch! Is he so soiling as all that, Helga? And yet how considerate he is! I believe he has half denuded his cabin for you."

"Well, good-night once more," said she, and closed the door of her berth upon herself.

I entered my cabin, wondering like a fool. I could witness nothing but groundless aversion in her thoughts of this Captain Bunting, and felt vexed by her behavior; for first I considered that, as in the lugger so here—some days, ay, and even some weeks, might pass without providing us with the chance of being conveyed on board a homeward-bound ship. I do not say I believed this; but it was a probable thing, and there was that degree of risk, therefore, in it. Then I reflected

that it was in the power of Captain Bunting to render our stay in his vessel either as agreeable as he had the power to make it, or entirely uncomfortable and wretched by neglect, insolence, bad-humor, and the like. I therefore regarded Helga's behavior as impolitic, and, not having the sense to see into it so as to arrive at a reason, I allowed it to tease me as a piece of silly girlish caprice.

This was in my mind as I entered my cabin. There was light enough to enable me to master the interior, and a glance around satisfied me that I was not to be so well used as Helga. There were a pair of blankets in the bunk, and an old pewter basin on the deck that was sliding to and fro with the motions of the vessel. This I ended by throwing the concern into the next cabin, which, so far as I could tell, was half full of bolts of canvas and odds and ends of gear, which emitted a very strong smell of tar. However, I was sleepier than I was sensible of while I used my legs, for I had no sooner stretched my length in the bunk, using the captain's slippers rolled up in my monkey-jacket as a pillow, than I fell asleep, though five minutes before I should have believed that there was nothing in opium to have induced slumber in the face of the complicated noise which filled that interior.

I slept heavily right through the night, and awoke at half past seven. I saw Punmeamootty standing in the door, and believe I should not have awakened but for his being there and staring at me. I lay a minute before I could bring my mind to its bearings; and I have some recollection of stupidly and drowsily imagining that I had been set ashore on an island by Captain Bunting, that I had taken refuge in a cave, and that the owner of that cave, a yellow wild man, had looked in, and finding me there, was meditating how best to dispatch me.

"Halloo?" said I. "What is it?"

"You wantchee water, sah?" said the man.

"Yes," said I, now in possession of all my wits. "You will find the basin belonging to this berth next door. A little cold water, if you please, and if you can possibly manage it, Punmeamootty, a small bit of soap and a towel."

He withdrew, and in a few minutes returned with the articles I required.

"How is the weather?" said I, with a glance at the screwed-up port-hole, the glass of which lay as dusky with grime as the scuttle of a whaler that has been three years a-fishing.

"Very proper wedder, sah," he answered.

"Captain Bunting up?"

"No, sah."

"You will be glad to get to Cape Town, I dare say," said I, scrubbing at my face, and willing to talk since I noticed a disposition in the fellow to linger. "Do you hail from that settlement, Punmeamootty?"

"No, sah: I 'long to Ceylon," he answered.

"How many Cingalese are there aboard?"

"T'ree," he answered.

"Do the rest belong to the Cape?"

He shook his head and replied, "No; one Burmah man, anoder Penang, anoder Singapore—allee like that."

"But your work in this ship ends at Cape Town?"

"Yes, sah," he answered, swiftly and fiercely.

"Are you all Mohammedans?"

"Yes, allee Mussulmen."

I understood by *allee* that he meant all. He fastened his dusky eyes upon me with an expression of expectation that I would pursue the subject: finding me silent, he looked behind him and then said, in a species of English that was not "pigeon," and that I can but feebly reproduce, though, to be sure, what was most remarkable it came from the color it took through his intonation, and that glitter in his eyes which made them visible to me in the dusk of the previous evening, "You have been wrecked, sah?" I nodded. "But you sabbee nabigation?"

I could not restrain a laugh. "I know nothing of navigation," said I; "but I was not wrecked for the want of it, Punmeamootty."

"But de beautiful young lady, she sabbee nabigation?" said he, with an apologetic conciliatory grin that laid bare a wide range of his gleaming white teeth.

"How do you know that?" said I, struck by the question.

"Me hear you tell de captain, sah."

"Yes," said I. "I believe she can navigate a ship." He tossed his hands and rolled up his eyes in ludicrous imitation, as I thought, of his captain's behavior when he desired to express admiration. "She beautiful young lady," he exclaimed, "and werry good—kind smile, and berry sorry for poor Mussulmen, sah."

"I know what you mean, Punmeamootty," said I. "We are both very sorry, believe me! The captain means well"—the man's teeth met in a sudden snap as I said this—"the man means well," I repeated, eying him steadily, "but it is a mistaken kindness. The lady and I will endeavor to influence him; though, at the same time, we trust to be out of the

ship very soon, possibly too soon to be of any use. Anything in sight?"

"No, sah."

He loitered still, as though he had more to say. Finding me silent, he made an odd sort of obeisance and disappeared.

Helga's cabin door was shut. I listened, but could not collect amid the creaking noises that she was stirring within. It was likely she had passed an uneasy night and was now sleeping, and in that belief I gained the hatchway and mounted on deck.

The first person I saw was Helga. She was talking to the two boatmen at the foot of the little poop-ladder, under the lee of the bulwarks, which were very nearly the height of a man. The decks were still dark with the swabbing-up of the brine with which they had been scoured. The galley chimney was hospitably smoking. A group of the colored seamen lounged to leeward of the galley, with steaming pannikins and biscuits in their hands, and, as they eat and drank, they talked incessantly. The fellow named Nakier stood on the forecastle with his arms folded, persistently staring aft, as it seemed to me, at Helga and the boatmen. The sun was about half an hour above the horizon; the sky was very delicately shaded with a frosty net-work of cloud, full of choice and tender tints, as though the sun were a prism flooding the heavens with many-colored radiance. Over the lee-rail the sea was running in a fine rich blue streaked with foam, and the wind was a moderate breeze from which the completely clothed masts of the bark were leaning with the yards braced forward, for, so far as I could tell by the sun, the wind was about south-east.

All these details my eye took in as I stepped out of the hatch. Helga advanced to meet me, and I held her hand.

"You are looking very bonny this morning," said I. "Your sleep has done you good. Good-morning, Abraham; and how are you, Jacob? You two are the men I just now want to see."

"Marning, Mr. Tregarthen," exclaimed Abraham. "How are you, sir? Don't Miss Nielsen look first-rate? Why, she ain't the same lady she was when we first fell in with ye."

"It is true, Helga," said I. "Did Captain Bunting smuggle some cosmetics into your cabin along with his wash-stand?"

"Oh, do not joke, Hugh," said she. "Look around the ocean: it is still bare."

"I've bin a-telling Miss Nielsen," exclaimed Abraham,

" that them colored chaps forrads are a-talking about her as if she were a diwinity."

" A angel," said Jacob.

" A diwinity," said Abraham, looking at his mate. " The cove they calls boss—that there Nakier yonder, him as is a-looking at us as if his heart was a-going to bust—what d'ye think he says—ay, and in fust-class English, too? 'That there gal,' says he, 'ain't no English woman. I'm glad to know it. She's got too sweet a hoye for an English woman.' 'What d'ye know about hoyes?' says I. 'English bad, bad,' says he; 'some good,' here he holds up his thumb as if a-counting wan; 'but many verec bad, veree bad,' he says, says he, and here he holds up his fower fingers, like a little sprouting of o'erripe plantains, meaning fower to one, I allow."

" It's pork as is at the bottom o' them feelin's," said Jacob.

" Abraham," said I, in a low voice, for I had no desire to be overheard by the mate, who came and went at the rim of the poop overhead in his walk from the taffrail to the break of the deck, " before you accept Captain Bunting's offer—"

" I have accepted it, Mr. Tregarthen," he interrupted.

" When?"

" Last noight, or call it this marning. He was up and down while I kep' a lookout, and wanst he says to me, 'Are you agreeable, Vise?' says he; and I says, 'Yes, sir,' having talked the matter o'er with Jacob."

" I hope the pair of you have thought the matter well out," said I, with a glance at the captain's cabin, from which, however, we stood too far to be audible to him in it. " I saw Nakier haranguing you yesterday afternoon, and, though you told me you didn't quite understand him, yet surely by this time you will have seen enough to make you guess that if the captain insists on forcing pork down those men's throats his ship is not going to continue a floating Garden of Eden."

" Whoy, that may be roight enough," answered Abraham; " but them colored chaps' grievances ha'n't got nothen to do with Jacob an' me. What I considered is this: here am I offered fower pound a month, and there's Jacob, who's to go upon the articles for three pound; that'll be seven pound 'twixt us tew men. Ain't that money good enough for the likes of us, Mr. Tregarthen? Where's the 'Airly Marn?' Where's my fifteen pound vorth o' property? Where's Jacob's height pound vorth—ay, ever farden of height pound?" he exclaimed, looking at Jacob, who confirmed his assurance with a prodigious nod. " As to them leather-colored covies," he

continued, with a contemptuous look forward, then pausing, he cried out, "'Soides, whoy shouldn't they eat pork? If it's good enough for me and Jacob, ain't it good enough for the loikes o' such a poor little parcel o' sickly flesh as that there Nakier and his mates?"

"It is a question of religion with them," said I.

"Religion!" grumbled Jacob. "Religion, Mr. Tregarthen, don't lie here, sir," putting his hand upon his waistcoat, "but here," pointing with a tarry-looking finger to where he imagined his heart was. "There hain't no religion in dishes. I've heerd of chaps a-preaching in tubs, but I never heerd of religion lying pickled in a cask. Don't you let them chaps gammon you, sir. 'Tain't pork: it's a detarmination to find fault."

"But have they not said enough in your hearing to persuade you they are in earnest?" said Helga.

"Why, ye see, lady," answered Abraham, "that their language is a sort o' conversation which there's ne'er a man along Deal beach as has ever been eddicated in, howe'er it may be along o' your part o' the coast, Mr. Tregarthen. What they says among themselves I don't onderstand."

"But have they not complained to you," persisted Helga, gently, "of being obliged by the captain either to go without food every other day or to eat meat that is forbidden to them by their religion?"

"That there Nakier," replied Abraham, "spun a long yarn yesterday to Jacob and me while we lay agin the galley feeling werry ordinary—werry ordinary indeed—arter that there bad job of the 'Airly Marn;' but he talked so fast, and so soft tew, that all that I could tell ye of his yarn, miss, is that he and his mates don't fancy themselves as comfortable as they might be."

I said quietly, for Mr. Jones had come to a halt at the rail above us: "Well, Abraham, my advice to you both is, look about you a little while longer before you allow your names to be put upon the articles of this ship."

At that moment the captain came out of the door of the cuddy, and the two boatmen, with a flourish of their hands to Helga, went rolling forward. He came up to us, all smiles and politeness. It was easy to see that he had taken some trouble in dressing himself; his whiskers were carefully brushed; he wore a new purple satin scarf; his ample black waistcoat hinted that it belonged to his Sunday suit, or "best things," as servants call them; his boots were well polished; he showed an abundance of his white cuff, and his wideawake sat

jauntily upon his head. His two or three chins went rolling and disappearing like a groundswell betwixt the opening of a pair of tall starched collars—an unusual embellishment, I should have imagined, at sea, where starch is as scarce as newspapers. He hoped Helga had slept well; he only trusted that the noises of straining and creaking below had not disturbed her. She must really change her mind, and occupy Mr. Jones's cabin. After shaking me by the hand, he seemed to forget that I stood by, so busy was he in his attention to Helga. He asked her to step on to the poop or upper deck.

"These planks are not yet dry," said he; "and besides," he went on smiling always, "your proper place, my dear young lady, is aft, where there is, at all events, seclusion, though, alas! I am unable to offer you the elegances and luxuries of an ocean mail steamer."

We mounted the ladder, and he came to a stand to survey the sea.

"What a mighty waste, is it not, Miss Nielsen? Nothing in sight. All hopelessly sterile. But it is not for me to complain," he added, significantly.

He then called to Mr. Jones, and all very blandly, with the gentlemanly airs and graces which one associates with the counter, he asked him how the weather had been since eight bells, if any vessels had been sighted, and so forth, talking with a marked reference to Helga being near and listening to him.

Mr. Jones, with his purple pimple of a nose of the shape of a woman's thimble standing out from the middle of his pale face, with a small but extraordinary light-blue eye twinkling on either side of it under straw-colored lashes and eyebrows resembling oakum, listened to and addressed the captain with the utmost degree of respect. There was an air of shabbiness and of hard usage about his apparel that bespoke him a man whose locker was not likely to be overburdened with shot. His walk was something of a shamble, that was heightened by the loose pair of old carpet slippers he wore, and by the frayed heels of his breeches. His age was probably thirty. He impressed me as a man whose appearance would tell against him among owners and ship-masters, who would therefore obtain a berth with difficulty, but who when once in possession would hold on tight by all possible strenuous effort of fawning, of agreeing, of submissively undertaking more work than a captain had a right to put him to.

While we thus stood I sent a look round the little "Light of the World," to see what sort of a ship we were aboard of, for down to this time I had scarcely had an opportunity of

inspecting her. She was an old vessel, probably forty years old. This I might have guessed from the existence of the cabins in the steerage; but her beam and the roundness of her bows and a universal worn air, that answered to the wrinkles upon the human countenance, likewise spoke her age very plainly. Her fittings were of the homeliest: there was no brass-work here to glitter upon the eye; her deck furniture was, indeed, as coarse and plain as a smack's, with a look about the skylight, about the companion hatch-cover, about the drumhead of the little quarter-deck capstan, and about the line of the poop and bulwark rail, as though they had been used over and over again by generations of seamen for cutting up plug tobacco upon. She had a very short forecastle-deck forward, under which you saw the heel of the bowsprit and the heaped mass of windlass; but the men's sleeping quarters were in the deck beneath, to which access was to be had only by what is commonly called a fore-scuttle—that is to say, a little hatch with a cover to it, which could be bolted and padlocked at will. Abaft the galley lay the long-boat, a squab tub of a fabric like the mother whose daughter she was. It rested in chocks, on its keel, and was lashed to bolts in the deck. There were some spare booms secured on top of it, but the boat's one use now was as a receptacle for poultry for the captain's table. On either side of the poop hung a quarter-boat in davits—plain structures, sharp-ended like whaling-boats. Add a few details, such as a scuttle-butt for holding fresh water for the crew to drink from; a harness-cask against the cuddy front, for storing the salted meats for current use; the square of the main-hatch tarpaulined and battened down; and then the yards mounting the masts and rising from courses to royals, spars and gear looking as old as the rest of the ship, though the sails seemed new, and shone very white as the wind swelled their breast to the sun, and you have as good a picture as I can put before you of this "Light of the World" that was bearing Helga and me hour by hour further and deeper into the heart of the great Atlantic, and that was also to be the theater of one of the strangest and wildest of the events which furnished forth this trying and desperate passage of my life.

Captain Bunting moved away with an invitation in his manner to Helga to walk. I lingered to exchange a word with the mate from the mere desire to be civil. Helga called me with her eyes to accompany her, then, hearing me speak to Mr. Jones, she joined the captain and paced by his side. I spied him making an angle of his arm for her to take, but she looked away, and he let fall his hand.

"If Abraham Wise," said I, "agrees to sail with you, Mr. Jones, you will have a very likely, lively fellow to relieve you in keeping watch."

"Yes; he seems a good man. It is a treat to see a white face knocking about this vessel's deck," he answered, in a spiritless way, as though he found little to interest him when his captain's back was turned.

"You certainly have a very odd-looking crew," said I. "I believe I should not have the courage to send myself adrift along with one white man only aboard a craft full of Malays."

"There were three of us," he answered, "but Winstanley disappeared shortly after we had sailed."

As he spoke, Nakier, on the forecastle, struck a little silver-toned bell eight times, signifying eight o'clock.

"Who is that copper-colored, scowling-looking fellow at the wheel?" I asked, indicating the man who had been at the helm when Helga and I came on board on the preceding day.

"His name is Ong Kew Ho," he answered. "A rare beauty, ain't he?" he added, with a little life coming into his eyes. "His face looks rotten with ripeness. Sorry to say he's in my watch, and he's the one of them all that I never feel very easy with of a dark night when he's where he is now and I'm alone here."

"But the look of those Asiatic folk don't always express their minds," said I. "I remember boarding a ship off the town I belong to and noticing among the crew the most hideous, savage-looking creature it would be possible to imagine: eyes asquint, a flat nose with nostrils going to either cheek, black hair wriggling past his ears like snakes, and a mouth like a terrible wound; indeed, he is not to be described; yet the captain assured me he was the gentlest, best-behaved man he had ever had under him, and the one favorite of the crew."

"He wasn't a Malay," said Mr. Jones, dryly.

"The captain didn't know his country," said I.

Here Abraham arrived to take charge of the deck. He had polished himself up to the best of his ability, and mounted the ladder with an air of importance. He took a slow, merchant-sailor-like, deep-sea survey of the horizon, following on with an equally deliberate gaze aloft at the canvas, then knuckled his brow to Mr. Jones, who gave him the course and exchanged a few words with him, and immediately after left the deck, howling out an irrepressible yawn as he descended the ladder.

It was not for me to engage Abraham in conversation. He was now on duty, and I understood the sea-discipline well

enough to know that he must be left alone. I thereupon joined Helga and Captain Bunting, not a little amused secretly by the quarter-deck strut the worthy boatman put on, by the knowing, consequential expression in his eyes as they met in a squint in the compass-bowl, by his slow look at the sea over the taffrail and the twist in the pursed-up lips as he went rolling forward to the break of the poop, viewing the sails as though anxious to find something wrong, that he might give an order and prove his zeal.

At half past eight Punmeamootty rang a little bell in the cabin, and we went down to breakfast. The repast, it was to be easily seen, was the best the ship's larder could furnish, and in excess of what was commonly placed upon the table. There was a good ham, there was a piece of ship's corned beef, and I recollect a jar of marmalade, some white biscuit, and a pot of hot coffee. The colored steward waited nimbly, with a singular swiftness and eagerness of manner when attending to Helga, at whom I would catch him furtively gazing askant, with an expression in his fiery, dusky eyes that was more of wonder and respect, I thought, than of admiration. At times he would send a sideways look at the captain that put the fancy of a flourished knife into one's head, so keen and sudden and gleaming was it. Mr. Jones had apparently breakfasted and withdrawn to his cabin, thankful, no doubt, for the chance to stretch his legs upon a mattress.

In the course of the meal Helga inquired the situation of the ship.

"We are, as nearly as possible," answered the captain, "on the latitude of the island of Madeira, and, roundly speaking, some hundred and twenty miles to the eastward of it. But you know how to take an observation of the sun, Mr. Tregarthen informed me. I have a spare sextant, and at noon you and I will together find out the latitude and longitude. I should very well like to have my reckoning confirmed by you," and he leaned toward her, and smiled and looked at her.

She colored, and said that, though her father had taught her navigation, her calculations could not be depended upon. But for her wish to please me, I believe she would not have troubled herself to give him that answer, but coldly proceeded with the question she now put:

"Since we are so close to Madeira, Captain Bunting, would it be inconveniencing you to sail your bark to that island, where we are sure to find a steamer to carry us home?"

He softly shook his head with an expression of bland concern,

while he sentimentally lifted his eyes to the tell-tale compass above his head.

"You ask too much, Helga," said I. "You must know that the deviation of a ship from her course may vitiate her policy of insurance, should disaster follow."

"Just so!" exclaimed the captain, with a thankful and smiling inclination of his head at me.

"Besides, Helga," said I, gently, "supposing, on our arrival at Maderia, we should find no steamer going to England for some days, what should we do? There are no houses of charity in that island of Portuguese beggars, I fear; and Captin Bunting may readily guess how it happens that I left my purse at home."

"Just so!" he repeated, giving me such another nod as he had before bestowed.

The subject dropped. The captain made some remark about the part of the ocean we were in being abundantly navigated by homeward-bound craft, then talked of other matters; but whatever he said, though directly addressed to me, seemed to my ear to be spoken for the girl, as though, indeed, were she absent, he would talk little or in another strain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BUNTING'S FORECASTLE FARE.

When breakfast was ended, Helga left the table to go to her cabin. Punmeamootty began to clear away the things.

"You can go forward," said the captain. "I will call you when I want you." I was about to rise. "A minute, Mr. Tregarthen," he exclaimed.

He lay back in his chair, stroking first one whisker and then the other, with his eyes thoughtfully surveying the upper deck, at which he smiled as though elated by some fine happy fancies. He hung in the wind in this posture for a little while, then inclined himself with a confidential air toward me, clasping his fat fingers upon the table.

"Miss Nielsen," said he, softly, "is an exceedingly attractive young lady."

"She is a good, brave girl," said I, "and pretty too."

"She calls you Hugh, and you call her Helga—Helga! a very noble, stirring name—quite like the blast of a trumpet, with something biblical about it too, though I do not know that it occurs in Holy Writ. Pray forgive me. This familiar interchange of names suggests that there may be more between you than exactly meets the eye, as the poet observes."

"No!" I answered, with a laugh that was made short by surprise. "If you mean to ask whether we are sweethearts, my answer is—No. We met for the first time on the twenty-first of this month, and since then our experiences have been of a sort to forbid any kind of emotion short of a profound desire to get home."

"Home!" said he. "But her home is in Denmark?"

"Her father, as he lay dying, asked me to take charge of her and see her safe to Kolding, where I believe she has friends," I answered, not choosing to hint at the little half-matured programme for her that was in my mind.

"She is an orphan," said he; "but she has friends, you say?"

"I believe so," I answered, scarcely yet able to guess at the man's meaning.

"You have known her since the twenty-first," he exclaimed: "to-day is the thirty-first—just ten days. Well, in that time a shrewd young gentleman like you will have observed much of her character. I may take it," said he, peering as closely into my face as our respective positions at the table would suffer, "that you consider her a thoroughly religious young woman?"

"Why, yes, I should think so," I answered, not suffering my astonishment to hinder me from being as civil and conciliatory as possible to this man, who, in a sense, was our deliverer, and who, as our host, was treating us with great kindness and courtesy.

"I will not," said he, "inquire her disposition. She impresses me as a very sweet young person. Her manners are genteel. She talks with an educated accent, and I should say her lamented father did not stint his purse in training her."

I looked at him, merely wondering what he would say next.

"It is, at all events, satisfactory to know," said he, lying back in his chair again, "that there is nothing between you—outside, I mean, the friendship which the very peculiar circumstances under which you met would naturally excite." He lay silent awhile, smiling. "May I take it," said he, "that she has been left penniless?"

"I fear it is so," I replied.

He meditated afresh.

"Do you think," said he, "you could induce her to accompany you in my ship to the Cape?"

"No," cried I, starting, "I could not induce her, indeed, and for a very good reason: I could not induce myself."

"But why?" he exclaimed, in his oiliest tone. "Why de-

cline to see the great world, the wonders of this noble fabric of universe, when the opportunity comes to you? You shall be my guests; in short, Mr. Tregarthen, the round voyage sha'n't cost you a penny!"

"You are very good!" I exclaimed, "but I have left my mother alone at home. I am her only child, and she is a widow, and my desire is to return quickly, that she may be spared unnecessary anxiety and grief."

"A very proper and natural sentiment, pleasingly expressed," said he; "yet I do not quite gather how your desire to return to your mother concerns Helga—I should say Miss Nielsen!"

I believe he would have paused at "Helga" and not have added "Miss Nielsen" but for the look he saw in my face. Yet, stirred as my temper was by this half-hearted stroke of impertinent familiarity in the man, I took care that there should be no further betrayal of my feelings than what might be visible in my looks.

"Miss Nielsen wishes to return with me to my mother's house," said I, quietly: "you were good enough to assure us that there should be no delays."

"You only arrived yesterday!" he exclaimed, "and down to this moment we have sighted nothing. But why do you suppose," added he, "that Miss Nielsen is not to be tempted into making the round voyage with me in this bark?"

"She must speak for herself," said I, still perfectly cool, and no longer in doubt as to how the land lay with this gentleman.

"You have no claim upon her, Mr. Tregarthen?" said he, with one of his blandest smiles.

"No claim whatever," said I, "outside the obligation imposed upon me by her dying father. I am her protector, by his request, until I land her safely among her friends in Denmark."

"Just so," said he; "but it might happen—it might just possibly happen," he continued, letting his head fall on one side and stroking his whiskers, "that circumstances may arise to render her return to Denmark under your protection unnecessary."

I looked at him, feigning not to understand.

"Now, Mr. Tregarthen, see here," said he, and his blandness yielded for an instant to the habitual professional peremptoriness of the ship-master, "I am extremely desirous of making Miss Nielsen's better acquaintance, and I am also much in earnest in wishing that she should get to know my character

very well. This can not be done in a few hours, nor, indeed, in a few days. You will immensely oblige me by coaxing the young lady to remain in this vessel. There is nothing between you. . . . Just so. She is an orphan, and there is reason to fear, from what you tell me, comparatively speaking, friendless. We must all of us desire the prosperity of so sweet and amiable a female. It may happen," he exclaimed, with a singularly deep smile, "that before many days have passed she will consent to bid you farewell and to continue the voyage alone with me."

I opened my eyes at him, but said nothing.

"A few days more or less of absence from your home," he continued, "can not greatly signify to you. We have a right to hope, seeing how virtuously, honorably, and heroically you have behaved, that Providence is taking that care of your dear mother which, let us not doubt, you punctually, morning and night, offer up your prayers for. But a few days may make a vast difference in Miss Nielsen's future; and, having regard to the solemn obligation her dying father imposed upon you, it should be a point of duty with you, Mr. Tregarthen, to advance her interests, however inconvenienced you may be by doing so."

Happily, his long-windedness gave me leisure to think. I could have answered him hotly; I could have given him the truth very nakedly; I could have told him that his words were making me understand there was more in my heart for Helga than I had been at all conscious of twenty minutes before. But every instinct in me cried, Beware! to the troop of emotions hurrying through my mind, and I continued to eye him coolly and to speak with a well-simulated carelessness.

"I presume, Captain Bunting," said I, "that if Miss Nielsen persists in her wish to leave your ship you will not hinder her?"

"That will be the wish I desire to extinguish," said he; "I believe it may be done."

"You will please remember," said I, "that Miss Nielsen is totally unequipped even for a week or two of travel by sea, let alone a round voyage that must run into months."

"I understand you," he answered, motioning with his hand; "but the difficulty is easily met. The Canary Islands are not far off. Santa Cruz will supply all her requirements. My purse is wholly at her service. And with regard to yourself, Mr. Tregarthen, I should be happy to advance you any sum in moderation, to enable you to satisfy your few wants."

"You are very good," said I; "but I am afraid we shall have to get you to transship us at the first opportunity."

A shadow of temper that was not a frown, and therefore I do not know well how to convey it, penetrated his smile.

"You will think over it," said he. "Time does not press. Yet we shall not find another port so convenient as Santa Cruz."

As he pronounced these words Helga entered the cuddy. He instantly rose, bowing to her and smiling, but said no more than that he hoped shortly to join us on deck. He then entered his berth.

Helga approached me close, and studied my face for a moment or two in silence with her soft eyes.

"What is the matter, Hugh?" she asked.

I looked at her anxiously and earnestly, not knowing as yet how to answer her, whether to conceal or to tell her what had passed. I was more astonished than irritated, and more worried and perplexed than either. Here was an entanglement that might vastly amuse an audience in a comedy, but that, in its reality, was about as grave and perilous a complication as could befall us. With the velocity of thought, even while the girl's eyes were resting on mine and she was awaiting my reply, I reflected—first, that we were in the power of this captain, in respect, I mean, of his detention of us, while his vessel remained at sea; next, that he had fallen in love with Helga; that he meant to win her if he could; that his self-complacency would render him profoundly hopeful, and that he would go on keeping us on board his craft under one pretext or another in the conviction that his chance lay in time, with the further help that would come to him out of her condition as an orphan and penniless.

"What is it, Hugh?"

The sudden, brave, determined look that entered the girl's face, as though she had scented a danger and had girded her spirit for it, determined me to give her the truth.

"Come on deck!" said I.

I took her hand, and we went up the little companion steps.

Abraham was standing near the wheel, exchanging a word or two with the yellow-skin who had replaced the fierce-faced creature of the earlier morning. There was warmth in the sun, and the sky was a fine clear blue dome, here and there freckled by remains of the interlacery of cloud which had settled away into the west and north. The breeze was a soft, caressing air, with a hint of tropic breath and of the equatorial sea-perfume in it, and the round-bowed bark was sliding along

at some four or five miles an hour, with a simmering noise of broken waters at her side. There was nothing in sight. Two or three copper-colored men squatted, with palms and needles in their hands, upon a sail stretched along the waist; Nakier, on the forecastle-head, was standing, with a yellow paw at the side of his mouth, calling instructions, in some Asiatic tongue, to one of the crew in the foretopmast cross-trees. I caught sight of Jacob, who was off duty, leaning near the galley door, apparently conversing with some man within. He nodded often, with an occasional sort of pooh-poohing flourish of his hand, puffing leisurely, and enjoying the sunshine. On catching sight of us he saluted with a flourish of his fist. This was the little picture of the bark as I remember it on stepping on deck with Helga that morning.

I took her to leeward, near the quarter-boat, out of hearing of Abraham and the helmsman.

"Now, what is it, Hugh?" said she.

"Why should you suppose there is anything wrong, Helga?"

"I see worry in your face."

"Well," said I, "here is exactly how matters stand;" and with that I gave her, as best my memory could, every sentence of the captain's conversation. She blushed, and turned pale, and blushed again; the shadows of a dozen emotions passed over her face in swift succession, and strongest among them was consternation.

"You were vexed with me for not being civil enough to him, Hugh," said she, "and you would not understand that the civiler I was the worse it might be with us. Such a conceited silly creature would easily mistake."

"Could I imagine that he was in love with you?"

"Oh! do not say that again," she cried, with disgust in her manner, while she made as though to stop her ears.

"How could I guess?" I went on. "His behavior seemed to me full of benevolence, hospitality, gratification at having us to talk to, with courtesy marked to you as a girl delivered from shipwreck and the hardships of the ocean."

"Will no ship come?" she cried, looking round the sea. "The thought of remaining in this vessel, of having to disguise my feelings from that man for policy's sake, of being forced to sit in his company and listen to him, and watch his smile and receive his attentions and compliments, grows now intolerable to me, Hugh!" and she brought her foot with a little stamp to the deck.

"Did you know you were so fascinating?" said I, looking at her. "In less than a day you have brought this pale, stout

captain to your feet. In less than a day! Why, your charms have the potency of Prospero's magic. In 'The Tempest,' Ferdinand and Miranda fall deeply in love, plight their troth, bill and coo and gamble at chess, all within three hours. This little ship promises to be the theater of another 'Tempest,' I fear."

"Why did not you make him understand, resolutely compel him to understand, that it is our intention to return to England in the first ship?" she exclaimed, with a glow in her blue eyes and a trace of color in her cheeks and a tremor in her nostrils.

"Bluntness will not do, Helga. We must not convert this man into an enemy."

"But he should be made to know that we mean to go home, and that his ideas—" she broke off, turning scarlet on a sudden, and looked down over the rail at the sea with a gleam of her white teeth showing upon the under lip she bit.

"Helga," said I, gently touching her hand, "you are a better sailor than I. What is to be done?"

She confronted me afresh, her blue eyes darkened by the suppressed tears which lay close to them.

"Let us," I continued, "look this matter boldly in the face. He is in love with you." For a second time she stamped her foot and bit her lip. "I must say it, for there lies the difficulty. He hopes, by keeping you on board, to get you to like, and then, perhaps, listen to him. He will keep me, too, for the present—not because he is at all desirous of my company, but because he supposes that in your present mood, or rather attitude, of mind you would not stay without me, or at least alone with him."

Her whole glowing countenance breathed a vehement No!

"He need not speak passing ships unless he chooses to do so," I went on; "and I don't doubt he has no intention of speaking passing ships. What then? How are we to get home?"

The expression on her face softened to a passage of earnest thought.

"We must induce him to steer his ship to Santa Cruz," she exclaimed.

"You will have to act a part then," said I, after pausing to consider. "He is no fool. Can you persuade him that you are in earnest in wishing to go to the Cape in this ship? If not, his long nose will sniff the stratagem, and Santa Cruz in a few days be remoter than it now is."

She reflected, and exclaimed:

"I must act a part if we are to get away from this vessel. What better chance have we than Santa Cruz? We must go ashore to make our purchases, and, when ashore, we would stop there. Yet what a degrading, what a ridiculous, what a wretched position to be in!" she cried. "I would make myself hideous with my nails to get you safely home to your mother, Hugh!" and, with a dramatic gesture I should have deemed the little, gentle creature incapable of, she put her fingers to her cheeks.

Abraham was now patroling the deck to windward, casting his eyes with a look of importance up at the sails, and then directing them at the sea-line. He would, to be sure, find nothing to excite his curiosity in this subdued chat betwixt Helga and me to leeward. I had a mind to call him and explain our new and astonishing situation; then thought, "No; let us mature some scheme first; he will help us better then, if he is able to help at all." I leaned against the rail with folded arms, deeply considering. Helga kept her gaze upon me.

"We should not scheme as though Captain Bunting were a villain!" said I.

"He is a villain to his men!" she answered.

"He is no villain to us, Helga! What we do not like in him is his admiration of you. But this does not make a rascal of him!"

"He promised to transfer us to the first ship that passed!" said she.

"Shall you be well advised in acting a part?" I exclaimed. "You are too frank, of too sweetly genuine a nature; you could not act; you could not deceive him!" said I, shaking my head.

The gratification my words gave her rose to her face in a little smile, that stayed for a moment like a light there.

"How frank and sweet I am I do not know," said she, artlessly; "but I love your praise, Hugh!"

"Madeira is yonder," said I, nodding into the westward, "some hundred odd miles distant, according to our friend's reckoning. If that be so, the Canaries must be within easy reach of two or three days, even at this dull pace. In fact, by to-morrow afternoon we could be having the Peak of Teneriffe blue in the heavens over the bow. We could not make the captain believe, in that time, that we, who have been consumed with anxiety to return to England, have suddenly changed our mind and are willing to sail in his ship to wherever he may be bound. He would say to himself, 'They want

me to steer for Santa Cruz, where they will go ashore and leave me.' "

"Yes, that is likely," said the girl.

"We must not speculate and plan as though he were a villain," I repeated. "I believe the safe course will be to behave as though we did not doubt he will transfer us when the chance offers, and we must be ceaseless in our expressions of anxiety to get home."

"That will be genuine in us," said Helga, "and I would rather act so. He will soon discover," added she, coloring, "that he is merely increasing the expenses of the voyage by detaining us."

"He is not a rascal," said I; "he means very honestly; he wishes to make you his wife." She raised her hand. "Admiration in him has nimble feet. I have heard of love at first sight, but have scarcely credited it till now." Her eyes besought me to be still, but I continued, urged, I believe, by some little temper of jealousy, owing to the thought of this captain being in love with her, which was making me feel that I was growing very fond of her too. "But his ideas are those of an honorable, pious man," said I. "He is a widower—his daughter leads a lonely life at home—he knows as much about you as he could find out by plying us both with questions. He is certainly not a handsome man, but—" here I stopped short.

She gazed at me with an expression of alarm.

"Oh, Hugh!" she cried, with touching plaintiveness of air and voice, "you will remain my friend!"

"What have I said or done to make you doubt it, Helga?"

"What would you counsel?" she continued. "Do you intend to side with him?"

"God forbid!" said I, hastily.

She turned to the sea to conceal her face from me.

"Helga," said I, softly, for there was no chance for further tenderness than speech would convey, with Abraham stumping the deck to windward and a pair of dusky eyes at the wheel often turned upon us, "I am sorry to have uttered a syllable to vex you. How much I am your friend you would know if you could see into my heart."

She looked at me quickly, with her eyes full of tears, but with a grateful smile too. I was about to speak.

"Hush!" she exclaimed, and walked right aft, raising her hand to her brow, as though she spied something on the horizon astern.

"A delightful day—quite tropical," exclaimed the captain,

advancing from the poop-ladder. "What does Miss Nielsen see?"

"She is always searching for a sail," said I.

"May I take it," said he, "that you have communicated to her what has passed between us?"

"Captain," I said, "you ask, and perhaps you expect, too much. You have been a married man; you must therefore know the ropes, as the sailors say, better than I, who have not yet been in love. All that I can positively assure you is that Miss Nielsen is exceedingly anxious to return home with me to England."

"It would be unreasonable in me to expect otherwise—for the present," said he.

He left me and joined Helga, and I gathered by the motions of his arms that he was discoursing on the beauty of the morning. Presently he went below, and very shortly afterward arrived bearing a little folding-chair and a cotton umbrella. He placed the chair near the skylight. Helga seated herself and took the umbrella from him, the shade of which she might find grateful, for the sun had now risen high in the heavens—there was heat in the light, with nothing in the wind to temper the rays of the luminary. The captain offered me a cigar with a bland smile, lighted one himself, and reposed in a careless flowing way upon the skylight close to Helga; his long whiskers stirred like smoke upon his waistcoat to the blowing of the wind, his loose trousers of blue serge rippled, his chins seemed to roll as though in motion down betwixt the points of his collar.

Clearly his study in the direction of posture was animated by a theory of careless, youthful, sailorly elegance; yet never did nautical man so completely answer to one's notions of a West End hair-dresser.

He was studiously courteous, and excessively anxious to recommend himself. I could not discover that he was in the least degree embarrassed by the supposition that I had repeated his conversation to Helga, though her manner must have assured him that I had told her everything. He was shrewd enough to see, however, that she was in a mood to listen rather than to be talked to, and so in the main he addressed himself to me. He asked me many questions about my life-boat experiences, particularly wished to know if I thought that my boat, which had been stove in endeavoring to rescue Miss Nielsen and her lamented father, would be replaced.

"Should a fund be raised," he exclaimed, "I beg that my name may not be omitted. My humble guinea is entirely at

the service of the noble cause you represent. And what grand end may not an humble guinea be instrumental in promoting? It may help to rescue many wretched souls from the perdition that would otherwise await them were they to be drowned without having time to repent. This is lamentably true of sailors, Mr. Tregarthen. Scarcely a mariner perishes at sea who would not require many years of a devotional life to purge himself of his numerous vices. An humble guinea may also spare many children the misery of being fatherless, and it may shed sunshine upon humble homes by restoring husbands to their wives. You will kindly put me down for an humble guinea."

I thanked him as though I supposed he was in earnest.

"You will never take charge of a life-boat again, I hope, Hugh," said Helga.

"Why not? I like the work," I answered.

"See what it has brought you to," said she.

"Into enjoying the association and friendship of Miss Helga Nielsen," exclaimed the captain. "Mr. Tregarthen will surely not regret that experience."

"I feel that I am responsible for his being here, Captain Bunting," said she, "and I shall continue wretched for his and his mother's sake till we are journeying to England."

"I would gladly put my ship about and sail her home to oblige you," exclaimed the captain, "but for one consideration: not the pecuniary loss that would follow—oh, dear, no!" he added, slowly shaking his head; "it would too quickly sever me from a companionship I find myself happy in."

She bit her lip, looking down with a face of dismay and chagrin, while he eyed her as though seeking for signs of gratification.

"The Canary Islands are within a short sail, I think, captain," said I.

"They are," he responded.

"It would occasion no deviation, I think, for you to heave off some port there—call it Santa Cruz—and send us ashore in one of your excellent, sharp-ended quarter-boats."

"That would be giving me no time," he answered without the least hesitation, and speaking and smiling in the politest, the most bland manner conceivable, "to prevail upon you and Miss Nielsen to accompany me."

"But to accompany you where, captain?" cried I, warming up.

"To the Cape," he answered.

"Ay, to the Cape," said I; "but I understood that you were to call there to discharge a small cargo and await orders."

"You do not put it quite accurately," said he, still oily to the last degree in his accent and expression. "I own the greater proportion of this vessel and my orders are my interests. When I have discharged this cargo I must look out for another."

"Yes," said I; "and when you have got it, where is it going to carry you to?"

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with a sigh, "who can pierce the future? But who would pierce it? Depend upon it, young gentleman, that human blindness—I mean intellectual blindness—" he was proceeding; but I was in no humor to listen to a string of insipid, nasally pronounced commonplaces.

"The long and the short of it, Captain Bunting," said I, finding an impulse in the soft but glowing eyes which Helga fixed upon me. But before I could proceed, Abraham came from the little brass rail which protected the break of the poop.

"Beg pardon, sir," said he, addressing the captain. "That there chap Nakier has arsted to be allowed to say a word along wi' ye."

"Where is he, Wise?" inquired the captain, smiling into the boatman's face.

"He's a-waiting down on the quarter-deck, sir."

"Call him!"

The "boss" mounted the ladder. I was again impressed by the modest, the gentle air his handsome face wore. His fine liquid, dusky eyes glittered as he approached, but without in the least qualifying his docile expression. He pulled off his queer old soldier's cap, and stood looking an instant earnestly from me to Helga before fastening his dark but brilliant gaze upon the captain.

"What now, Nakier?"

"Dere's Goh Lyn Koh says de men's dinner to-day is allee same as yesterday," said the man.

"You mean pork and pea-soup?"

"Ya-as, sah," answered the fellow, nodding with an Eastern swiftness of gesture.

"Just so. Pork and pea-soup. You threw your allowance overboard yesterday. I have not ordered pork and pea-soup to be given to you two days running as a punishment!—oh, dear, no!" he went on, with a greasy chuckle coming out, as it were, from the heart of his roll of chins. "What! punish a crew by giving them plenty to eat? No, no; I simply in-

tend that you and the rest of you shall know that I am captain of this ship, and that I must have my way!"

"Dat is proper," exclaimed Nakier. "No man ever say no to dat. But we no eat pork. We sooner eat dirt. We will not eat pea-soup—it is gravy of pork. We sooner drink tar."

"Can you conceive such bigotry, such superstition, in men who are really, Miss Nielsen, not totally wanting in brains?" exclaimed the captain, turning to Helga.

She looked away from him.

"Nakier," he continued, "you know, my good fellow, there must be a beginning. Have you ever tasted pork?"

"No, sah; it is against my religion!" cried the man, vehemently.

"Your religion!" exclaimed the captain. "Alas, poor man! it is not religion, it is superstition of the most deplorable kind! and, since every captain stands as father to his crew, it is my duty, as your father for the time, to endeavor to win you, my children for the time, to a knowledge of the truth!" He glanced askew at Helga, and proceeded: "You will begin by eating each of you a mouthful of pork. I do not expect much—just one mouthful apiece to begin with. You may then follow on with a meal of salt beef. The first step is everything. My idea is to deal with one superstition at a time. Why should pork be unfit for you? It is good for this lady; it is good for me; for this gentleman; for Wise there. Are we inferior to you, Nakier, that we should be willing to eat what you and my poor dark crew—dark in mind as in skin—profess to disdain?"

"We can not eat pork," said the man.

"Oh, I think so. You will try?"

"No, sah, no!"

There was a sharp, wild gleam in his eyes as he pronounced these words, a look that desperately contradicted his face, and his gaze at the captain was now a steadfast stare.

"I desire," continued the captain, very blandly, "to get rid of your deplorable prejudices as I would extinguish a side of bacon—rasher by rasher." This he said with another leer at Helga. "I have some knowledge of your faith. You need but make up your mind to know that what I do I do in the highest interests of my crew, and then I shall have every hope of getting you to listen to me, and of transforming you all into thoughtful Christian men before we reach Cape Town."

"You will give us beef to-day, sah?"

"I think not, and if you throw your allowance overboard you shall have pork again to-morrow."

"We did not sign your articles for dis," said the man, who spoke English with a good accent.

"The articles provide for certain food," answered the captain, "and that food is served out to you in very good measure. You will try—you will try to eat this pork, and when I learn that you have every one of you swallowed one mouthful, you will find me indulgent in other directions, and ready to proceed on the only course which can result in your salvation."

"You will not give us beef to-day, sah?" said the man, shaking his head.

"Yes, but I must learn first that you have eaten of the pork. I will not insist upon the soup, but the pork you must eat!"

"No, sah!"

"You can go forward!"

"We signed for meat, sah: we can not work on biscuit!"

"Meat you have, and excellent meat too! It is my business to make Christians of you. This little struggle is natural. You can go forward, I say!"

Helga, catching her breath as though to a sudden hysteric constriction of the throat, cried out:

"Captain, do not starve these men! Give them the food their religion permits them to eat!"

He looked at her for a moment or two in silence. It was hard to guess at his mind under that fixedly smiling countenance, but it seemed to me as though in those few moments of pause there was happening a really bitter conflict of thought in him.

"I know my duty!" he exclaimed. "I know what my responsibilities are here, what is expected of me!" He reflected again. "I shall have to render an account for my conduct, and human weakness is not forgiven in those who know what is right, and who are in a position to maintain, enforce, and confirm the right." He paused again, then saying softly to Helga, "For your sake!" he turned to Nakier. "This lady wishes that the crew shall have the food their black and wicked superstitions suffer them to eat. Be it so—for to-day. Let the cook go to Mr. Jones's cabin for the key of the harness-cask."

Without a word, the man rounded upon his heel and went forward.

The captain gazed at Helga while he pensively pulled his whiskers.

"It is just possible," said he, "that you may not be very intimately acquainted with the character of the religion I am endeavoring to correct in those poor dark fellow-creatures of mine."

"I dare say they are very happy in their belief," she answered.

"Ay, and the drunkard is happy in his bottle, and the pickpocket when his hand is in the stranger's fob; but it is a sort of happiness the honest part of the world are incessantly struggling to cure. Let me give you two examples of the credulity of our friends yonder," bending his head sideways in the direction of the forecastle. "Nakier will tell you, and will solemnly swear to the truth of what he tells, that Mohammed was conveyed on a mysterious animal from Mecca to Jerusalem, whence he ascended the seven heavens, conversed with patriarchs and angels, then descended to Jerusalem and returned to Mecca—all in the tenth part of a night. Nakier and his mates there believe that. They will also swear that the moon, at Mohammed's command, performed seven revolutions round the temple of Mecca, saluted the Prophet in the Arabic language, entered at the collar of his shirt, and issued forth through his sleeve. What say you to that, Miss Nielsen? And a third: that the Prophet saw angels in heaven whose heads were so large that it would take a bird a thousand years to fly from one ear to the other. What say you to that?" he repeated, smiling.

"They are to be thought of as fairy-tales," said I. "We tell fairy-tales to children, and they believe them. Those men there are children in their way, too. They will not be punished hereafter, I dare say, for being born credulous."

"Besides," exclaimed Helga, with a defiant gleam in her eye as she looked at the captain, "who are we, to sit in judgment on one another? Let every man see to himself!"

He arched his eyebrows and spread his waistcoat, and had fetched a deep breath preparatory to delivering one of his fathoms of tedious commonplace; but his eye was at that instant taken by the clock under the skylight.

"Ha!" he cried, "I must fetch my sextant, it is drawing on to noon. I will bring you an instrument, Miss Nielsen: we will shoot the sun together."

"No, if you please," she exclaimed.

He entreated a little, but her "no" was so resolutely pronounced that, contenting himself with a bland flourish of his hand, he went below.

"What is to be done, Hugh?" whispered Helga. "We

shall not be able to induce him to land us at Santa Cruz. Is he mad, do you think?"

"No more than I am," said I. "One vocation is not enough for the fellow. There are others like him in my country of Great Britain. What a sea captain, to be sure! How well he talks—I mean for a sea captain! He has a good command of words. I wager he has made more than one rafter echo in his day. And he is sincere, too. I saw the struggle in him when you asked that the men should have their bit of beef. Yet if they don't cut his throat—"

"How am I to make him understand," said she, "that nothing can follow his keeping us here?"

"At all events," I exclaimed, "we can do nothing until we sight a ship heading for home."

"That is true," she answered.

"We came aboard yesterday," I continued, "since when nothing has been sighted, therefore, be the disposition of the man what it will, he could not down to this moment have put us in the way of getting home. But here he comes."

He rose through the companion-hatch, with a sextant in his hand, and, stepping over to the weather side of the deck, fell to ogling the sun that flamed over the weather-bow.

CHAPTER XIX.

WE ARE SPOKEN.

On the afternoon of this same day of Tuesday, October 31st, Helga having gone to her cabin, I stepped on deck to smoke a pipe—for my pipe was in my pocket when I ran to the lifeboat, and Captain Bunting had given me a square of tobacco to cut up.

We had dined at one. During the course of the meal Helga and I had said but very little, willing that the captain should have the labor of talking. Nor did he spare us. His tongue, as sailors say, seemed to have been slung in the middle, and it wagged at both ends. His chatter was an infinite variety of nothing; but he spoke with singular enjoyment of the sound of his own voice, with a ceaseless reference, besides, in his manner to Helga, whom he continued silently and self-complacently to regard in a way that rendered her constantly uneasy, and kept her downward-looking and silent.

But nothing more at that table was said about our leaving his ship. Indeed, both Helga and I had agreed to drop the subject until an opportunity for our transference should ar-

rive. We might, at all events, be very certain that he would not set us ashore in the Canary Islands; nor did I consider it politic to press him to land us there, for waiving all consideration of other reasons which might induce him to detain us, it would have been unreasonable to entreat him to go out of his course to oblige us, who were without the means to repay him for his trouble and for loss of time.

He withdrew to his cabin after dinner. Helga and I sat over his draught board for half an hour; she then went below, and I, as I have already said, on deck, to smoke a pipe.

The wind had freshened since noon, and was now blowing a brisk and sparkling breeze out of something to the northward of east; sail had been heaped upon the bark, and when I gained the deck I found her swarming through it under overhanging wings of studding-sail, a broad wake of frost-like foam stretching behind, and many flying-fish sparkling out of the blue curl from the vessel's cutwater ere the polished round of brine flashed into foam abreast of the fore-rigging. Mr. Jones stumped the deck, having relieved Abraham at noon. The fierce-faced, lemon-colored creature with whithered brow and fiery glances grasped the wheel. As I crouched under the lee of the companion-hatch to light my pipe, I curiously and intently inspected him; strangely enough finding no hinderance of embarrassment from his staring at me too; which, I take it, was owing to his exceeding ugliness, so that I looked at him as at something out of nature, whose sensibilities were not of a human sort to grieve me with a fancy of vexing them.

"Well, Mr. Jones," said I, crossing the deck and accosting the shabby figure of the mate as he slouched from one end to another in shambling slippers and in a cap with a broken peak, under which his thimble-shaped nose glowed in the middle of his pale face like—to match the poor creature with an elegant simile—the heart of a daisy, "this is a very good wind for you, but bad for me, seeing how the ship heads. I want to get home, Mr. Jones. I have now been absent for nearly eleven days, though my start was but for an hour or two's cruise."

"There's no man at sea," said he, "but wants to get home, unless he's got no home to go to. That's my case."

"Where do you hail from, Mr. Jones?"

"Whitechapel," he answered, "when I'm ashore. I live in a big house; they call it the Sailor's Home. There are no wives to be found there, so that the good of it is to make a man glad to ship."

"The sea is a hard life," said I, "and a very great deal harder than it need be—so Nakier and his men think, I war-

rant you. A little too much pork, I fear, goes to the making of the captain's religious ideas."

"The pork in this ship," said he, "is better than the beef; and what is good enough for English sailors is good enough for dirt-colored scaramouches."

"Ay! but the poor fellows' religion is opposed to pork."

"Don't you let them make you believe it, sir," he exclaimed. "Religion! You should hear them swear in English! They want a grievance. That's the nature of everything afore the mast, no matter what be the color of the hide it's wrapped up in."

"What sort of sailors are they?"

"Oh, they tumble about; they're monkeys aloft; they're willing enough; I'm bound to say that."

I could instinctively guess that whatever opinions I might offer on the captain's treatment of his crew would find no echo in him. Poverty must make such a man the creature of any ship-master he sailed with.

"Have you received orders from Captain Bunting," I asked, "to signal and bring to any homeward-bound ship that may come along?"

"No, sir."

"We wish to be transshiped, you know, Mr. Jones. We should be sorry to lose the opportunity of a homeward-bounder through the captain omitting to give you orders, and through his being below and asleep, perhaps, at the time."

"I can do nothing without his instructions, sir," he exclaimed, with a singular look that rose to the significance of a half smile.

"All right!" I said, perceiving that his little light-blue eyes had witnessed more than I should have deemed them capable of observing in the slender opportunities he had had for employing them.

The wind blew the fire out of my pipe, and to save the tobacco I went down to the quarter-deck for the shelter of the bulwarks there. While I puffed I spied Jacob down in the lee fore-rigging repairing or replacing some chafing-gear upon the swifter-shroud. I had not exchanged a word with this honest boatman since the previous day, and strolled forward to under the lee of the galley to greet him. I asked him if he was comfortable in his new berth. He answered yes; he was very well satisfied; the captain had given orders that he was to have a glass of grog every day at noon; the provisions were also very good, and there was no stint.

"'Soides," he called down to me, with his fat, ruddy face

framed in the squares of the ratlines, "three pound a month's good money. There'll be something to take up when I gets home, something that'll loighten the loss o' my eight pound o' goods and clothes, and make the foundering of the 'Airly Marn' easier to think of."

"You and Abraham, then, have regularly entered yourselves for the round voyage?"

"Ay; the cap'n put us on the articles this afternoon. He called us to his cabin and talked like a gemman to us. 'Tain't often as one meets the likes of him at sea. No language—a koind smile—a thank'ye for whatever a man does, if so be as it's rightly done—a feeling consarn for your morals and your comforts: tell 'ee, Mr. Tregarthen, the loikes of Cap'n Buntin' ain't to be fallen in with every day—leastways, in vessels arter this here pattern, where mostly a man's a dog in the cap'n's opinion, and where the mate's got no other argument than the fust iron belaying-pin he can whip out."

"I am very glad to learn that you are so well satisfied," said I. "A pity poor Thomas isn't with you. He would be as satisfied, I dare say, as you are with what has fallen out."

"Pore Tommy! There's nothen in my toime as has made me feel so ordinary as Thomas's drownding. But as to him making hisself happy here—"

"I beg your pardon, sah," said a voice close beside me.

I turned, losing the remainder of Jacob's observations, and perceived the face of Nakier in the galley door, that was within an arm's-length of me from where I leaned. His posture was one of hiding, as though to conceal himself from the sight of the poop. As I looked, a copper-colored face with black, angry eyes flashing under a low forehead as wrinkled as the rind of an old apple, with the temper that worked in the creature, showed behind Nakier's head, and vanished in a breath. I now recollected that when I had first taken up my station under the lee of the galley I had caught the hiss of a swift, fiery whispering within the little structure, but it had instantly ceased on my calling to Jacob, and the matter went out of my head as I listened to the boatman in the rigging.

"I beg your pardon, sah! May I speakee a word with you?"

"What is it, Nakier?" I exclaimed, finding a sort of pleasure in the mere contemplation of his handsome face and noble liquid Eastern eyes, dark and luminous like the gleam you will sometimes observe in the midnight sea.

"Are you a sailor, sah?"

"I am not," I responded.

"Can you tellee me de law of ships?"

Here the copper-colored face came out again, and now hung steady with its frown over Nakier's shoulder; but both fellows kept all but their heads hidden.

"I know what you mean," I answered. "I fear I can not counsel you."

"Our captain must have us starve," said he; "he give us meat we must not eat, and on dose days we have only bread and water. Dat is not right?"

"No, indeed," said I; "and how little we think it right you may know by what the lady said to-day."

"Ah! she is good, she is good!" he exclaimed, always speaking very softly, and clasping his long thin fingers with filbert-shaped nails while he upturned his wonderful eyes. "We are not of de captain's religion—he sabbee dat when we ship. Is dere law among Englishman to ponish him for trying to make us eat what is forbidden?"

"I wish I knew—I wish I could advise you," said I, somewhat secretly relieved by hearing this man talk of law; for when I had watched him that morning on the poop I would have sworn that his and his mates' whole theory of justice lay in the blades which rested upon sheaths strapped to their hips. "One thing you may be sure of, Nakier, Captain Bunting has no right to force food upon you that is forbidden to you by your religion. There must be lawyers in Cape Town who will tell you how to deal with this matter if it is to be dealt with. Meanwhile, try to think of your captain in this business as—" I significantly tapped my forehead. "That will help you to patience, and the passage to the Cape is not a long one."

The copper-colored face behind Nakier violently wagged, the frown deepened, and the little, dangerous eyes grew, if possible, more menacing in their expression.

"He is a cruel man," said Nakier, with a sigh as plaintive as one could imaigne in any lovesick Eastern maid; "but we will be patient; and, sah, I t'ank you for listening."

The copper-colored face disappeared.

"You are no sailor, sah!" continued Nakier, smiling, and showing as pearl-white a set of teeth as were ever disclosed by the fairest woman's parted lips; "and yet you have been shipwreck?"

I briefly related my life-boat adventure, and in a few words completed the narrative of the raft and of our deliverance by the lugger. Indeed, it pleased me to talk with him: his accent, his looks, were a sort of realization, in their way, of early

boyish dreams of travel; they carried me in fancy to the provinces of the sun; I tasted the ripe aromatic odors of tropic vegetation, there seemed a scent of the hubble-bubble in the blue and sparkling breeze gushing fair over the rail. He begot in me a score of old yearning imaginations—of the elephant richly castellated, of the gloom of palatial structures dedicated to idols, their domes starry with incrustation of gems and the precious ores.

The brief spell was broken by Jacob's gruff 'longshore voice:

"It don't look, Mr. Tregarthen, as if you and the lady was to git home as fast as ye want to."

"No," I replied. "Do you see anything in sight up there, Jacob?"

He spat, and looked leisurely ahead.

"Nothen, sir."

"I beg pardon, sah!" broke in Nakier's voice. "Do you sabbee nabigation?"

"I do not," I answered, struck with a question that recalled Punmeamootty's inquiries that morning.

"But Mr. Vise," he continued, "he sabbee nabigation?"

I shook my head with a slight smile.

"He has some trifling knowledge," said I. "Fortunately, there is no occasion to trust to his skill."

"De sweet young lady sabbee nabigation, sah?"

"I will not answer for it!" I exclaimed, looking at him. A sudden fancy in me may have been disclosed by my eyes. His gaze fell, and he drew in his head. Just then I caught sight of Helga at the break of the poop to leeward, looking along the decks. She saw me, and beckoned. As I knocked the ashes out of my pipe, Jacob cried out: "Blowed if I don't believe that's a steamer's smoke ahead." Ha! thought I, Helga has seen it, and I at once made for the poop-ladder.

It was as I had supposed. She had seen the smoke when she came on deck, and instantly looked about for me. It was the merest film, the faintest streak, dim as a filament of spider's web; but it was directly ahead, and it was easy to guess that unless the steamer was heading east or west she must be coming our way, for assuredly, though the "Light of the World" was sweeping through it at some six or seven knots, we were not going to overhaul a steamer at that pace.

A telescope lay in brackets inside the companion-way; I fetched and leveled it, but there was nothing more to be seen than the soaring of the thin blue vein of smoke from behind the edge of the sea, where the dark, rich central blue of it went lightening out into a tint of opal. It did not take long,

however, to discover by the hanging of the smoke in the same place that the steamer was heading directly for us. I put down the glass, and said to Mr. Jones:

"Will you be so good as to call the captain and tell him that there is a steamer in sight, coming this way?"

"I have no orders to call the captain merely to report a ship in sight, sir," he answered.

"That may be," said I; "but here is a chance for us to leave this vessel, and the captain might not thank you to keep him ignorant of the opportunity."

"I can't help it, sir. My duty here is to obey orders, and to do what's expected of me, and no more," and so saying he marched shambling aft; yet I will not say that his manner of leaving me was abrupt or offensive.

"There is no time to be lost, Helga," said I. "If that steamer is doing ten and we are doing six the joint speed is sixteen knots, and she will be abreast of us and away again quickly. I will report to the captain myself;" with which I went on to the quarter-deck and passed into the cabin and knocked on the door of Captain Bunting's berth.

He immediately cried: "Who's there?"

"Mr. Tregarthen," I answered.

"Are you alone?" he called.

I told him I was.

"Then pray walk in," said he.

I opened the door and found him lying in his bunk in his shirt-sleeves. Full as I was of the business of the steamer heaving into view, I could yet manage to notice, now that he was under no particular obligation to smile, that his habitual grin when his face was off duty, so to speak, was of the kind that is called sardonic. It was the set of his mouth with the thick curve of its upper lip that made the smile; but his eyes bore not the least part in this expression of mirth. It was a mere stroke of nature in him, however, and, though the congenital grin did not increase his beauty, it left untouched in his countenance the old character of blandness, self-complacency, and an air of kindness too.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Tregarthen?" said he, promptly sitting up in his bunk, with a glance around for his coat.

"I must ask your pardon for intruding upon you," said I; "there is a steamer's smoke in sight over the bows; Mr. Jones declined to report her to you. I venture to do so, and I have also to ask you, Captain Bunting, to signal her to stop that she may receive Miss Nielsen and me."

"I shall be very willing to transfer you, Mr. Tregarthen," said he, without more or less significance in his manner than was usual in it; "but you must not, you really must not, ask me to part in this sort of hurry with your sweet, engaging companion."

"I certainly shall not leave you without her," said I, breathing quickly.

"Just so," he exclaimed, "nor is it my wish that you should. I want you to convert your experience of shipwreck into a little holiday cruise. I hope you are comfortable with me?"

"Perfectly comfortable; but all the same, Miss Nielsen and I desire to return to England, and I must entreat—indeed, Captain Bunting, I must *insist* upon you signaling the steamer that is rapidly approaching us."

He opened his eyes wide at the word insist, which I deplored having made use of at the moment it had escaped me; but he continued very bland, and his smile being now vitalized, as when he was at the table or on deck with us, had lost what I had found sardonic in it.

"A captain's powers, Mr. Tregarthen, are considerable," he exclaimed. "He is first on board his own ship; his will is the law that governs the vessel; no man aboard but he can *insist* for an instant. But my desire is for cordial feelings between us. Let us be friends and talk as friends. Pray bear with me. You are in possession of my hopes. Do not add fears to them by your behavior."

He dropped his head on one side, and surveyed me with an eye that seemed almost wistful. I believed that he meant to keep me talking till the steamer had passed.

"Captain Bunting," said I, "I am as fully disposed as you are to be friendly; but I must tell you that, if you decline to transfer us—if, in other words, you force us to proceed on this voyage, you will be acting at your peril. I shall exact reparation, and whatever the law can do for me shall be done. Practically you will be abducting Miss Nielsen, and that, you must know, is a highly punishable offense."

He motioned with both his hands.

"It is no abduction," said he. "When you rescue a young lady with your life-boat from a foundering craft you do not abduct her. I can understand your impatience, and forgive your irritability. Yet I had thought to have some claim upon you for a more generous, for a handsomer interpretation of my wishes. What is the reason of this extreme hurry in you to return home?"

"You surely do not require me to repeat my answer to that question!" I exclaimed, curbing my temper with an effort.

"To be sure. You are concerned for your poor dear mother. Come, Mr. Tregarthen, suppose we send news of your safety by this steamer you have reported!" His face beamed. "Let me see—your home is—your home is—" he scratched his head. I viewed him without speaking. "Ah, I have it—Tintrenale!" He spelled it twice or thrice. "Hugh Tregarthen, Tintrenale. Come, the steamer shall report your safety, and then your mind will be at ease."

"I am to understand that you refuse to transfer us, Captain Bunting?"

"Nay; never interpret the mind of another harshly. You know my wishes: every hour renders them dearer and dearer to me."

Under all this blandness I could now perceive a spirit of resolution that was clearly no more to be influenced by me than his ship's side was to be kicked out by a blow of my foot. I turned to leave the cabin.

"If you are going on deck, will you have the kindness to send Mr. Jones to me?" said he.

I pulled the door to, and regained the poop.

"The captain wants you," I called to Mr. Jones, who immediately left the deck. Helga came to me.

"He refuses to transship us," said I.

"He dare not!" she cried, turning pale.

"The creature, all smiles and blandness, says no, with as steady a thrust of his meaning as though it were a boarding-pike. We have to determine either to jump overboard or to remain with him."

She clasped her hands. Her courage seemed to fail her; her eyes shone brilliant with the alarm that filled her.

"Can nothing be done? Is it possible that we are so entirely in his power? Could we not call upon the crew to help us?" A sob arrested her broken exclamations.

I stood looking at the approaching steamer, struggling with my mind for some idea to make known our situation to her as she passed, but to no purpose. Why, though she should thrash through it within earshot of us, what meaning could I hope to convey in the brief cry I might have time to deliver? I can not express the rage, the bitterness, the mortification, the sense, too, of the startling absurdity of our position, which fumed in my brains, as I stood silently gazing at the steamer, with Helga at my side, white, straining her eyes at me, swiftly breathing, with a sob now again in her throat.

In the short time during which I had been below, the approaching vessel had shaped herself upon the sea, and was growing large with a rapidity that expressed her an ocean mail-boat. Already, with the naked sight, I could catch the glint of the sun upon the gilt device at her stem-head, and sharp flashes of the reflection of light in some many-windowed deck structure broke from her, end-on as she was, to her slow, stately swaying, as though she were firing guns.

The captain remained below. A few minutes after Mr. Jones had gone to him, he—that is, the mate—came on to the poop bearing a great blackboard, which he rested upon the deck.

"Captain Bunting's compliments, Mr. Tregarthen," said he, "and he'll be glad to know if this message is satisfactory to you?"

Upon the board was written, in chalk, in very visible, decipherable characters, like the letters of print, the following words:

HUGH TREGARTHEN, OF TINTRENALE,
BLOWN OUT OF BAY NIGHT OCTOBER 21ST,
IS SAFE
ON BOARD THIS SHIP, "LIGHT OF THE WORLD."
BUNTING, MASTER, TO CAPE TOWN.
PLEASE REPORT.

"That will do," said I, coldly, and resumed my place at the rail.

Helga said, in a low voice: "What is the object of that board?"

"They will read the writing aboard the steamer," I answered, "make a note of it, report it, and my mother will get to hear of it and know that I am alive."

"But how will she get to hear of it?"

"Oh, the message is certain to find its way into the shipping papers, and there will be twenty people at Tintrenale to hear of it and repeat it to her."

"It is a good idea, Hugh," said she. "It is a message to rest her poor heart. It may reach her, too, as quickly as you yourself could if we went on board that steamer. It was clever of you to think of it."

"It was the captain's suggestion," I exclaimed.

"Hugh, it is a good idea!" she repeated, with something of life coming into her blanched, dismayed face; "you will feel a little happier. I shall feel happier too. I have grieved to

think your mother may suppose you drowned. Now, in a few days she will know that you are well."

"Yes, it is a good idea," said I, with my eyes gloomily fastened upon the steamer; "but is it not monstrous that we should be imprisoned in this fashion? That fellow below has no right to detain us. If it should cost me five years of my income, I'll punish him. It is his admiration for you that makes him reckless—but what does the rascal hope? He talked of his willingness to transfer me, providing you remained."

"Oh, but you would not leave me with him, Hugh!" she cried, grasping my arm.

"Leave you, Helga! No, indeed. But I made one great blunder in my chat with him this morning. He asked me if there was anything between us—meaning were we sweethearts, and I said no. I should have answered yes; I should have told him we were betrothed; then perhaps he would have been willing to let us leave him."

She returned no answer. I looked at her, and saw an expression in her face that told me I had said too much. The corners of her little mouth twitched, she slightly glanced at me and tried to smile on observing that I was regarding her, then made a step from my side as though to get a better view of the steamer.

"She's a fine big ship," exclaimed Mr. Jones, who had quietly drawn close to me; "a Cape boat. In six days' time she'll be snug in dock. When I was first going to sea I laughed at steam. Now, I should be glad if there was nothing else afloat."

My impulse was to draw away, but my temper had somewhat cooled, and was now allowing me the exertion of my common-sense again. If I was to be kept aboard the ship, it could serve no sort of end to make an enemy of Mr. Jones.

"Yes," said I, "she is coming along in fine style—a mail-steamer apparently. Why will not the captain signal her? Surely she would receive us!"

"Not a doubt of it," he answered, almost maliciously; "but the captain knows his own business, sir."

"Where's your flag-locker?" cried I. "Show it me, and I'll accept the responsibility of hoisting the ensign half-mast high!"

"Not without the captain's orders, Mr. Tregarthen," said he.

"The captain!" I exclaimed "He has nothing to do with me. He's your master, not mine!"

Helga softly called to me. I went to her.

"Do not reason with him, Hugh!" she whispered. "Let the people in that steamer read the message, and we can afford to be patient—for a little," she added.

"For a little!" I rejoined. "But how long will that little make? Is it to stretch from here to Table Bay?"

But by this time the steamer was on the lee bow, and, when abreast, would be within a few cables' length of us. I thought to myself, Shall I spring upon the rail and hail her in God's name, wave my hands to her to stop, and take my chance of her people hearing the few words I should have time to bawl? Then, with the velocity of thought, I reflected that the mate would be certain to hinder any such attempt on my part, to the length, I dare say, of laying hands upon me and pulling me off the rail, so that I might subject myself to what would prove but little short of an outrage, while I should likewise forfeit the opportunity of getting the message delivered; for there was no man on the poop to hold up the board but the mate, and if the mate was busy with me the board must remain hidden.

All this I thought, and while I thought the steamer was sweeping past us at a speed of some thirteen knots, with Mr. Jones standing something forward of the mizzen-rigging holding up the board at arm's-length.

The picture of that rushing metal fabric was full of glittering beauty. Her tall promenade-deck, draped with white awnings, out of which the black column of her funnel forked leaning, was crowded with passengers, male and female. Dresses of white, pink, green—the ladies of South Africa, I believe, go very radiantly clad—fluttered and rippled to the sweep of the strong breeze raised by the steamer's progress. Those who walked came to a stand to survey us, and a dozen binocular glasses were pointed. High above, on the white canvas bridge, the mate in charge of the ship was reading the handwriting on the black-board through a telescope that flashed like silver in his hands. Beside him, twinkling in buttons and lace, stood the commander of the steamer, as I might suppose. The sun was in the south-west sky; his reddening brilliance beat full upon the ship that was thundering by faster than a hurricane could have blown the "Light of the World" along; and the glass in her line of port-holes seemed to stream in fire as though the tall black iron sides were veritably belted with flame. There were stars of gold in her bright yellow masts and a writhing of glowing light all about the gilt work with which her quarters were glorified.

She rolled softly, and every inclination was like the twist of a kaleidoscope for tints. How mean did the little bark look at that instant! how squalid her poor old stumpy decks with their embellishment of rude scuttle-butt, of grimy caboose, of squab long-boat, not to mention the choice humanities of her forecastle, the copper-colored scarecrows who had dropped the various jobs they were upon to stare with their sloe-like eyes at the passing show!

She had not swept past abreast by more than her own length when the twinkling commander on the bridge flourished his arm.

"And about time, too!" cried Mr. Jones, lowering the board and leaning it against the rail. "They must be poor hands at spelling aboard that ship to keep me holding up that board as if I were a topsail-yard proper to set a whole sail upon!"

"Have they read the message, do you think, Mr. Jones?" cried Helga.

"Oh, yes, yes, miss," he answered.

He ran in an awkward sprawl to the skylight, where the telescope lay, pointed it, and exclaimed, "See for yourself, miss!"

She leveled the glass with the ease and precision of an old sailor.

"Yes, Hugh," she called to me, while she held the telescope to her eye; "the man in the jacket and buttons is writing in what looks to be a pocket-book; the other bends over him as though to see that the words are correct. I am satisfied!" and, putting the glass down, she returned to me.

The steamer was now astern of us, showing but little more than the breadth of her, rapidly growing toy-like as she swept onward, with an oil-smooth wake spreading fan-shaped from her counter, and the white foam curving with the dazzle of sifted snow from either side the iron tooth of her shearing stem. My heart ached with the yearning for home as I followed her. At that moment eight bells were struck forward, and almost immediately Abraham came aft to relieve Mr. Jones, who, after saying a word or two to the boatman, picked up the board and went below.

CHAPTER XX.

I MAKE FREE.

"THERE'S a hopportunity lost, Mr. Tregarthen," exclaimed Abraham, looking at the receding steamer; "not that me and

Jacob ain't satisfied, but there's ne'er a doubt that wessel 'ud ha' taken you and the lady, if so be as Capt'n Bunting had arsted her."

"We are kept here against our will," said I. "What the man means to do I don't know, but what he can do I now see. Unless I can get those black fellows to back the topsail and put us aboard the next ship when she comes along, here we must stop until it is the captain's pleasure to release us."

"But what does he want along of ye?" inquired Abraham, in a low, hoarse voice, with a glance at the open skylight.

I looked at Helga, and then said bluntly—for I had some dim hope of this boatman and his mate being able to help us, and the plain truth must therefore be given to them:

"The long and short of it is, Abraham, the captain greatly admires Miss Nielsen—he has fallen in love with her, in short—and so you have it."

Helga looked and listened without any air of embarrassment, as though the reference were of general instead of individual interest.

"But he hain't fallen in love with you, sir? Why do he want to keep ye both, then? Couldn't he have sent you aboard?"

"You astonish me!" I cried. "Do you suppose I would leave this lady alone in the vessel?"

"Why, p'r'aps not," he answered; "but still, 'tain't as if you was a lady, one of her own sex, as was hacting companion to her. Oi don't mean to say that one man's as good as another; but I don't see no call for you to keep all on in this here wessel."

"What am I to understand you to mean?" cried I. "That Miss Nielsen is to be left without a protector in the company of a fellow like Captain Bunting?"

"But if he's willing to be her protector, sir, ain't it all right?" he inquired.

"Has not your head been turned?" said Hegla, warmly, with a flushed face.

He looked stupidly from one to the other of us with a slow gaze and a mind laboring to master the difficulty he could not understand.

"Sorry if I've said anything to offend ye, miss," said he; "this here capt'n's an honorable man, Oi allow, and he's evidently on the lookout for a wife. All I says is, what's the good of his keeping Mr. Tregarthen away from his home when he's willing to take his place?"

"But he must not take his place!" exclaimed Helga, with

glowing eyes, in which I looked to see a tear presently. "I would drown myself if I were to be left here alone!"

A slow smile animated the leathern countenance of Abraham.

"Then, mum, asking your pardon, all Oi can say is, Mr. Tregarthen should ha' put it differently. Where there's wan there's no call for tew, and there being wan already, then, of course, it's the capt'n's duty to send ye both home as soon as he can."

"If Captain Bunting persists," said I, not choosing to follow the line of Abraham's reasoning, "what is my remedy? You Deal boatmen have the reputation of knowing the law pretty well. First, has he the right to carry us with him against our wishes?"

"There's never much question of right along with sea captains," he answered. "My 'sperience is that what the master of a wessel chooses to do he will do, and the rights of it somehow seem to come out of his doing of it."

"But have we no remedy?" said I.

"Ask yourself the question!" he answered. "Where's the remedy to be found?" and here he sent his eyes roaming over the sea and up aloft and along the decks.

"Of all Job's comforters!" I exclaimed.

"If I was you," he continued, apparently not understanding my remark, and sending another cautious look at the open skylight, with a further subduing of his voice, "what Oi'd do is this: Oi'd just enjoy myself at this 'ere gemman's expense, eat his wittles and drink his rum—and I'm bound to say this, that a better drop o' rum than he keeps in that there locker of his isn't to be met with afloat or ashore—I say, Oi'd drink and eat at his expense, and keep my spirits as joyful as sarcumstances might permit, but taking care to let him know every day, ay, and p'r'aps twice a day—say at breakfast and at supper—that the lady and me wants to get home; and this Oi'd dew till we got to port, and then Oi'd bring an action agin him and sail home on the damages, with a few pound to the good."

He had barely ceased when he turned sharply round and marched aft, and as he did so the captain mounted the poop-ladder, exclaiming:

"What very enjoyable weather, to be sure! Mr. Jones informs me that the message was duly noted. Now, Miss Nielsen, we may take it that our friend Mr. Tregarthen's mind is perfectly at ease."

It was four o'clock when the steamer passed, and half an

hour later she was out of sight, so rapid was the combined pace of the vessels. Her name was large upon her stern had we chosen to read it, but the mate was too busy with his board and I with my temper to note the letters, and Helga did not think of doing so, and thus it was that the steamer passed away and none of us knew more about her than that she was a Cape Union mail-liner bound to England with now a message, meant for my mother, on board.

The captain hung about us, and was all blandness, courtesy, and admiration when he addressed Helga or directed his eyes at her. On his first joining us she said quickly, pointing to the steamer that was still in sight:

"Why have you suffered us to lose that opportunity?"

"Mr. Tregarthen's and your company," he answered, "makes me so happy that I can not bear to part with you yet!"

Her little nostrils enlarged, her blue eyes glittered, her breast quickly rose and fell.

"You called yourself a Samaritan yesterday!" she exclaimed, with all the scorn her tender soul was capable of and her pensive, pretty face could express. "Is this the way in which Samaritans usually behave?"

He viewed her as though she were a picture that can not be held in a new position without disclosing a fresh grace.

"You are too good and kind to be cruel," said he, regarding her with deepening admiration, as it seemed to me. "The Samaritan played his part fairly well yesterday, I believe." He blandly bowed to her with a countenance of exquisite self-complacency. "He is still on board, my dear young lady, with a character in essentials unchanged, merely enlarged." Here he spread his fingers upon his breast, and expanded his waistcoat, looking at her in a very knowing sort of way, with his head on one side. "Now that we have sent our message home, there is no hurry. Our little cruise," he exclaimed, pointing over the bow, "is almost entirely tropical, and there is no reason at all why we should not find it delightful!"

I caught Helga's eye, and exhorted her by a glance to keep silent. She fixed her gaze upon the deck, with a lip lightly curled by disgust, and I stepped aft under a pretense to look at the compass, with so much more contempt and anger than I could hold between my teeth that I dared not speak for fear I should say a very great deal too much.

The breeze slackened as the sun sunk, and at supper, as the captain persisted in calling the last meal, the ocean fell calm and the old broad-bowed bark rolled sleepily, but with much

creaking of her rheumatic bones, upon a long-drawn polished swell flowing out of the north-east. Her canvas beat the masts and fetched reports out of the tall spars that penetrated the little cuddy like discharges of musketry.

For a long while the captain gave Helga and me no opportunity for a quiet talk. At table he was more effusive than he had yet been, distressingly importunate in his attentions to the girl, to whom he would address himself in tones of lover-like coaxing if she happened to say no to his entreaties to her to drink a little wine, to try a slice of ham, and the like. He begged that we should both make ourselves thoroughly at home; his colored cook, he said, was not a first-rate hand, but if Miss Helga ever had a fancy she need but name it and it would go very hard with the cook if he failed to humor her.

"We are not a yacht," said he, pulling a whisker and looking around, "but, most fortunately, gaudy mirrors and handsome carpets and the ginger-bread ornamentations of the pleasure craft need never form any portion of human happiness at sea. The sun looks as brightly down upon "The Light of the World" as upon the most stately ship afloat, the ocean breeze will taste as sweetly over my bulwark rails as on the bridge of the gallantest man-of-war that flies the crimson cross;" and thus he went on vaporing as usual in fathoms of commonplace, yet with a bland underlying insistence always upon our being his guests, upon our remaining with him and being happy, as though, indeed, we had cheerfully consented to stop, and were looking forward with great enjoyment to the voyage.

I was as cold and distant as I could well be, answered him in monosyllables, eat as if with aversion from the food before me, which, nevertheless, I constrained myself to devour merely to keep body and soul together. But he did not seem to heed my manner in the least; I could swear, indeed, that he did not observe it. He was wholly engrossed in contemplation of Helga, and in the enjoyment of enlarging his waistcoat, and delivering more or less through his nose, with a fixed smile and somewhat leering eye, the dull, trivial, insipid contents of his mind.

He asked the girl to play draughts with him when Punmeamootty had cleared the table. On her declining, he fetched from his cabin the volume of Jeremy Taylor—it was that divine's "Holy Living and Dying," I think—and asked permission to read a few pages aloud. She could not refuse, and I see that extraordinary ship-master now, standing under the lamp, holding the portly volume up with both hands, smiling

upon the page, pausing at intervals to look over the top of the book at the girl with a nod to serve as a point of admiration, and reading nasally in a voice without the faintest inflection, so that at a little distance his delivery must have sounded like a continuous groan. He then begged her to read to him.

"What greater treat could we have," said he, looking at me, "than to hear the rich, noble, impressive words of this great bishop pronounced by the charming lips of Miss Helga Nielsen?"

But she curtly refused; and, after hovering about her for another half hour, during which I would notice a growing air in him that was a distinct intimation, in its way, of his entire satisfaction at the progress he was making, he withdrew to his cabin.

Helga looked at me with weariness and dismay, and moistened her lips.

"This is worse than the raft," said I.

"It is so bad," she exclaimed, "that I feel persuaded it can not last."

"Let us go on deck. If we linger here he may rejoin us. How tragical it all is one may know by the humor of it."

We went softly to the companion steps, and I recollect that I looked over my shoulder to see if he was following us—than which I can recall no better proof of my perfect recognition of our helplessness.

The new moon had followed the sun, and the planet would not be showing by night for two or three days; but in the south, and over our mastheads, the sky was richly spangled with stars, which burned in one or two dyes of glory, and very sharply, whence, from recollection of a like sight at home, I supposed that hard weather was at hand. There was some little lightning, of a delicate shade of violet, in the north-east, which, indeed, would have been no noticeable thing down in this part of the world but for the mountainous heaping of cloud it revealed, a black sullen mass stretching along the sea-line in that quarter, and putting a hue as of ink into the dusk which swept in glittering obscurity to the shadow of it. There was a great deal of greenish fire in the sea, and it broadened and shrunk in wide spaces in the lift of the noiseless running swell as though the ways of a tinted lantern were cast upon the water. The dew was plentiful, and lay along the rails and upon the skylight, crisp as frost in the starshine.

It was Abraham's watch, and I spied his figure flitting cumbrously in the neighborhood of the wheel, at which stood the shape of some colored man, motionless as though carved in

ebony, faintly touched by the sheen of the binnacle lamp. I was in no humor to converse with the boatman. His stupid talk that afternoon in response to my questions had vexed me, and I was still angry with the fool, as I chose to think him, spite of the claims he had upon my kindness and gratitude.

I put Helga's hand under my arm, and we quietly patroled the deck to leeward. Our conversation wholly concerned our position—it would only tease you to repeat it. There was nothing to suggest, no plan to propose; for think, advise, scheme as we might, it could only come to this: that if the captain declined to part with us, then, unless the men took our side and insisted on putting us aboard a passing ship, we must stop. But if the crew took our side, it would be mutiny with them; and bewilderingly disagreeable as our situation was, preposterously and ridiculously wretched as it was, yet assuredly it was not to be mended by a revolt among those dusky-skins forward.

Yet the fancy of stirring up the Malays to befriend us was in my mind as I walked with the girl.

"God forbid," said I, "that I should have a hand in it; yet, for all that, I believe it is to be done. I had a short talk with Nakier to-day, and there was that in his questions and his manner which persuades me that the train is ready, and nothing wanting but the spark."

"A mutiny is a terrible thing at sea," said she; "and what would men like the crew of this ship stop at?"

"Ay, nothing more terrible, Helga. But are we to be carried to the Cape?"

"The captain has no intention of putting into Santa Cruz," said she.

"That we may be sure of. But does the fellow intend that you shall pass week after week with no other apparel than what you stand up in?"

I was interrupted by Abraham sending a hurricane shout into the blackness forward for some hands to clew up the fore and main-royals, and for others to lay aft and haul down the gaff-topsail.

"It's a-going to blow to-night, Mr. Tregarthen," he called across to me.

"Yes; and you may see where it is coming from, too," I replied, not knowing till then that he had observed us.

In a few moments the silence that had hung upon the vessel, with nothing to disturb it but an occasional sob of water and the beating of canvas hollowing into the masts to the roll

of the fabric, was broken by the strange howling noises raised by the colored seamen as they hauled upon the gear.

"Get them sails furled, my lads!" bawled Abraham; "and the rest of ye lay aft and take this 'ere mizzen off her."

"It is wonderful that the fellows should understand the man," said I.

"There's the captain!" exclaimed Helga, instantly halting, and then recoiling in a way that dragged me a pace back with her.

He rose through the companion-hatch, his outline vaguely visible in the dim radiance sifting through the cabin skylight. Abraham addressed him.

"Quite right, Wise, very wise of you, Wise!" he exclaimed. "There is a marked fall in the barometer, and I perceive lightning in the north-east, with a deal of rugged cloud down there. His shadowy form stepped to the binnacle, into which he peered a moment. "I think, Wise," said he—and, to use a Paddyism, I could see the man's fixed and singular smile in the oiliness of his accents—"that you can not do better than go forward and rouse up all hands. I can rely best upon my crew when the weather is quiet."

Abraham trudged forward, and in a minute later I heard him thumping heavily on the fore-hatch, topping the blows with a boatswain's hoarse roar of "All hands shorten sail!"

"The captain's politeness," I said, "will end in making that Deal boatman sit at his feet."

"He is afraid of his crew, perhaps," answered Helga, "and is behaving so as to make sure that the two men will stand by him should difficulties come."

"It was a bad blow that sunk the fellows' lugger, Helga. We might have sighted that steamer of to-day and be now homeward bound at the rate of fourteen knots an hour."

"And it is all my fault!" she cried, in tones impassioned by regret and temper. "But for me, Hugh—"

I silenced her by taking her hand as it lay in my arm and pressing it. She drew closer to me, with a movement caressing but wistful too, though finely and tenderly simple.

I did not doubt that the captain perceived us; nevertheless, he hung near the wheel, never coming further forward than the companion-hatch, while we kept at the other end of the little poop, where the shadow of the port-wing of mainsail lay heavy.

Shortly after Abraham had summoned the men, the decks were alive with sliding and gliding shapes, and the stillness of the ocean night was clamorous with parrot-like cries. The

lightning had ceased, but the darkness was fast deepening, and overhead the stars were beginning to languish in the projected dimness of the growing mass of cloud that, now that there was no play of violet fire upon it, was indistinguishable in its own dumb, brooding obscurity.

"Whatever is to come will happen on a sudden," said I.

We neither of us cared to keep the deck now that the captain had arrived, and descending the ladder, we entered the cabin. Under other conditions I should have been willing, and indeed anxious, to assist the crew, but now I was resolved not to touch a rope, to maintain and present as sullen a front as I could contrive, to hold apart with Helga, to mark my resentment by my behavior, and so, perhaps—but God knows I had no hope of it—to intimidate the fellow into releasing us by obliging him to understand that he had already gone a very great deal too far. There was much noise on deck; Mr. Jones was bawling from the forecastle, and Abraham from the waist, and the songs of the Malays might easily have passed for the cries of people writhing in pain. Apparently the captain was alarmed by the indications of the glass and the look of the weather in the north-east, and was denuding his little ship as speedily as might be. His own voice began to sound now, and, though it was perfectly distinguishable, there was nothing nasal, bland, or greasy about it. On the contrary, his roars seemed to proceed from a pair of honest sea-lungs, as though what was nautical in him had been worked up by the appearance of the weather, and was proving too strong for the soapy exterior of his habitual manner.

"He can be natural when he forgets himself," said I.

"It is quite possible that he swears at times," said Helga.

"One touch of nature in the fellow would make me feel almost comfortable," I exclaimed.

"He is not a true sailor: he never could be natural for any length of time," said Helga.

The pattering of the naked feet of the crew was like the noise of a shower of rain. Helga seemed to be able to follow what was being done, as though she were on deck directing the crew.

"They have furled this sail—they are reefing that sail—now they are hauling down such and such a jib—now they are stowing the mainsail," she would say, giving the canvas its proper name, and looking at me with a little smile in her liquid-blue eyes, as though the interest in the sailors' work made her forget our troubles.

"Be as nautical as you like with me," said I. "I love to

hear you pronounce the strange, uncouth language of the sea; but guard your lips before the captain. The more sailorly you are, the more he will admire you."

"What would make him hate me?" she exclaimed, with the light of the smile going out of her eyes, and her white brow contracting. "How is he to be sickened, Hugh?"

"Oh! what can you do, Helga? What can a pretty girl do that will not heighten the passion of a man who has fallen in love with her?"

"Call me pretty if you will," said she, with a maidenly droop of her eyelids, "but do not speak of me as a girl with whom anybody has fallen in love."

"By George!" said I, starting and heaving a long sigh, with a look at the clock, the hands of which were now at nine, "the road to Kolding gets longer and longer. But we shall measure it—we shall measure it yet, Helga!" I quickly added, heartily grieved by the sorrow that entered her face.

"What a strange dream has all this time been!" she half murmured, pressing her eyes. "My father stood by my side last night, I felt his kiss—oh, Hugh! it was colder than the salt water outside."

She uttered an exclamation in Danish, with a little passionate shake of the head.

"I hope you are quite comfortable below," exclaimed a much too familiar voice, and looking up I spied the long whiskers and smiling countenance of Captain Bunting framed in the open casement of the skylight.

Helga rallied as if to a shock, and stiffened into marble, motionless and with a hardening of her countenance that I should have thought impossible to the gentle, ingenuous prettiness of her face.

"I fear," he continued, talking through the skylight, "that we are in for some nasty weather; but my bark is stripped and nearly ready for the affray. I am grieved not to be able to join you, Miss Nielsen. It is necessary that I should remain on deck. You are partaking of no refreshment. I will send Punmeamootty to you. Pray give him your orders."

His whiskers floated out into the obscurity like two puffs of smoke, and he called, but in genteel accents, for Helga was now listening, and he knew it, to Abraham to send Punmeamootty "to wait upon his guests in the cabin." A moment after his whiskers reappeared.

"I have to beg, Miss Nielsen, that you will consider yourself mistress here. And before you withdraw to rest—and, whatever may happen, pray slumber securely, for I shall be watch-

ing the ship—may I entreat you to occupy Mr. Jones's berth, which you will find so very much more airy and comfortable than the dark, confined steerage?"

"I am quite satisfied with my accommodation, thank you," she answered, without looking up.

He youthfully wagged his head in reproach of what his manner seemed to consider no more than an enchanting girlish capriciousness, and adding, "Well, I entreat you both to make yourselves thoroughly at home," he disappeared.

Punmeamootty arrived. He entered soundlessly as a spirit, and with the gliding movements that one could imagine of a phantom. I said to Helga:

"Abraham's philosophy shall be mine. My temper shall not prevent me from using our friend's larder. You asked just now what will sicken him. Let us eat and drink him up! Punmeamootty, when is the gale going to burst?"

"It will not be long, sah," he answered, showing his teeth.

"Put the best supper you can upon the table. Have you nothing better than rum to drink?"

"Dere is wine, sah."

"Yes, and very poor wine too. Have you no brandy?"

"Yes, sah, de capt'n hab some choice brandy for sickness."

"Put a bottle of it on the table, Punmeamootty, and be quick, like a good fellow, as you are to serve the food before this sweet little ship begins to kick up her heels."

He showed his teeth again, with a glance at the skylight, following it on with a short-lived look of deep interest at Helga, then slipped away.

With wonderful nimbleness he had spread the cloth, and put ham, salt beef, biscuit, and such things upon the table.

"Now draw that cork!" said I.

The pop of it brought the whiskers to the open skylight as if by magic.

"Quite right, quite right!" exclaimed the captain. "I hope, Miss Helga, that this repast is of your ordering? What have you there, Punmeamootty?" he suddenly cried, with excitement. "That is brandy, I believe?"

"I ordered it!" I called out in a sullen voice.

"You will handle it tenderly, if you please," said he, with a trifle of asperity in his speech. "It is a fine cordial brandy, and I have but three bottles of it."

I returned no answer, and he vanished.

"Upon my word, I believe Abraham is right, after all!" said I, with a laugh. "Now, Helga, to punish him, if the road to his sensibility lie through ham and beef!"

She feigned to eat merely to please me, as I could see. Though I was not very hungry, I made a great business of sharpening my knife, and fell to the beef and ham with every appearance of avidity, not doubting that we should be furtively surveyed from time to time by the captain, who could peep at us unseen without trouble as he passed the skylight, and who could very well overhear the clatter of dishes, the sharpening of my knife, and my calls to the steward, so silent did the night continue, as though there rested some great hush of expectancy upon the ocean.

I filled a bumper of brandy and water, and exclaimed in a loud voice:

"Here's to our speedy release, Helga! But if that is not to happen, then here's to the safest and swiftest passage this crazy old bucket is capable of making! And here's to proceedings hereafter to be taken!"

The colored steward stood looking on with a grin of wonder.

"Capital brandy, this, Punmeamootty," I sung out in accents that might have been heard upon the forecastle. "Another drop, if you please! Thank you! I will help myself."

A mere drop it was, for I had had enough; but I took care by my posture to persuade an eye surveying me from above that I was not sparing the bottle.

"You may clear away, Punmeamootty; and if you can find a cigar I shall feel obliged by your bringing it to me."

"Well, and how are we getting on?" exclaimed the captain, bending his head into the skylight.

"We have supped, thank you," I answered, haughtily and coldly. "Punmeamootty, a cigar, if you please!"

The captain's head vanished.

"Me no sabbee where capt'n him keep his cigar," said Punmeamootty.

"Ransack his cabin!" said I, loudly.

The fellow shook his head, but there was enjoyment in his grin with an expression of elation in his eyes that borrowed a quality of fierceness from the singularly keen gleam which irradiated their dusky depths. I was about to speak, when Helga raised her hand.

"Hark!" she cried.

I bent my ear, and caught a sound resembling the low moan of surf heard at a distance.

"More than a capful of wind goes to the making of that noise," said I.

A bright flash of lightning dazzled upon the skylight and eclipsed the cabin lamp with its blinding bluish glare. A small

shock of thunder followed. I heard the captain cry out an order; the next minute the skylight was hastily closed and a tarpaulin thrown over it.

"Bring me my oilskins, Punmeamootty!" shouted the captain down the companion-way. The man ran on deck with the things.

"Can that be rain?" cried Helga.

Rain it was, indeed! a very avalanche of wet charged with immense hailstones. The roar of the smoking discharge upon the planks was absolutely deafening. It lasted about a couple of minutes, then ceased with startling suddenness, and you heard nothing but the surf-like moaning that had now gathered a deeper and a more thrilling note, mingled with the wild sound of sobbing in the scuppers and a melancholy hissing of wet as the water on the quarter-deck splashed from side to side to the light rolling of the bark. Yet fully another five minutes passed in quiet, while the growling of the thunder of the still distant storm-swept sea waxed fiercer and fiercer. It was as though one stood at the mouth of a tunnel and listened to the growing rattling and rumbling of a long train of goods wagons approaching in tow of a panting locomotive.

Then in a breath the wind smote the bark, and down she leaned to it. So amazingly violent was the angle, I do most truthfully believe that for the space of twenty or thirty seconds the bark lay completely on her beam ends, as much so as if she were bilged high and dry upon a shoal, and there was a dreadful noise of water pouring in upon her deck from over the submerged lee main-deck rail.

Helga was to windward, and the table supported her, but the chair upon which I was seated broke away with me, and I fell sprawling upon my back amid a whole raffle of the contents of the table, which Punmeamootty had not yet removed. The full mess of it came headlong about me with a mighty smash; the beef, the ham, the bottle of brandy now shivered into a thousand pieces, the jam-pots, the biscuits, the knives and forks—all these things I lay in the midst of, and such was the heel of the deck that I could not stir a limb. Helga shrieked. I cried out, "I am not hurt; I'll rise when I can." Some one was hoarsely bawling from the poop; but, whatever the meaning of the yell might have been, it was immediately followed by a loud report resembling the blast of a twenty-four-pounder gun. "There goes a sail!" I shouted. The vessel found life on being relieved of the canvas, whatever it was; there was a gradual recovery of her hull, and presently she was on a level keel, driving smoothly as a sleigh over a level plain of snow,

but with such an infernal bellowing and hooting and ear-piercing whistling of wind accompanying her that there is nothing I can imagine to liken it to.

I waited awhile, and then, bidding Helga stay where she was, went on to the quarter-deck; but all betwixt the rails was of a pitch darkness, with a sort of hoariness in the blackness on either hand outside, rising from the foam, of which the ocean was now one vast field. I mounted the poop-ladder, but was blinded in a moment by the violence of the wind, that was full of wet, and was glad to regain the cabin; for I could be of no use, and there was no question to be asked nor answer to be caught at such a time.

CHAPTER XXI.

JOPPA IS IN EARNEST.

It was about half past nine when this gale took us, but such was the force and weight of it, so flattening and shearing was its scythe-like horizontal sweep, that no sea worth speaking of had risen till ten o'clock, and then, indeed, it was beginning to run high. All this while there had been no sound of human voices, but at this hour a command was delivered above our heads, and going on to the quarter-deck, I dimly discerned the figures of men hauling upon the fore-braces; but they pulled dumbly; no song broke from them; they were silent as though in terror. A little later on I knew by the motions of the bark that she had been brought to the wind and lay hove to.

That few vessels would better know how to plunge and roll than this old "Light of the World" I might have guessed from her behavior in quiet weather when there was nothing but a slight swell to lift her. But I never could have conjectured how truly prodigious was her skill in the art of tumbling. She soared and sunk as an empty cask might. She took every hollow with a shock that threatened to rend her bones into fragments, as though she had been hurled through the air from a mighty height; and when she swung up an acclivity, the sensation was that of being violently lifted, as by a balloon or by the grip of an eagle. Groans and cries rose from her interior as though she had a thousand miserable, perishing slaves—men, women, and children—locked up in her hold.

"This," said I to Helga, "is worse than the 'Anine.'"

"Yet it was blowing harder on that Saturday night than it is now," she answered, watching the mad oscillations of the

cabin lamp with serene eyes and a mouth steadfast in expression. "I have a greater dread of Captain Bunting's smile," she continued, "than of any hurricane that can blow across the ocean." She looked at the clock. "He is certain to arrive shortly. He is sure to find some excuse to torture me with his politeness. He will tease me to exchange my cabin. I think I will go to bed, Hugh."

There was little temptation to remain up. I put my hand under her arm to steady the pair of us, and we passed on to the quarter-deck, where I found the hatch leading to our sleeping quarters shut. We lifted it, and looked into a blackness profounder than that of a coal-mine. On this I roared for Punmeamootty. I shouted four or five times at the top of my lungs, and then some voice bawled from over the rail of the deck above, "What's wrong down there?" Who it was I could not tell; it was impossible to distinguish voices amid the hellish clamor of the wind roaring in the rigging with the sound of a tempest-swept forest. I took no notice, and bawled again for Punmeamootty, and, after a little, the poor colored wretch came out of the darkness into the sheen of the cabin-light that feebly touched the quarter-deck, crawling on his hands and knees. He was soaked through, and, when he stood up, could scarcely keep his feet. Indeed, forward, the seas were sweeping the decks in sheets, and each time the vessel lifted her bows the water came roaring in a fury of foam to the cuddy front.

We were forced to put the hatch on again to keep the sea out of the ship till Punmeamootty came staggering out of the cuddy with a lantern. Helga then dropped below with amazing dexterity, and I handed the light down to her, requesting that she would hang it up and leave it burning, as I was in no mood to "turn in" just then, wishing to see more of the weather before resting, and to smoke a pipe. I put the hatch on and re-entered the cuddy, followed by Punmeamootty.

"You seem half drowned!" said I.

"A sea knock me down, sah. Is dere danger, sah?"

"I hope not," I answered. "Do you feel equal to picking up that mess?" and I pointed to the broken china and bit of beef, and so on.

He turned a terrified eye upon them, staggering and swaying wildly, and then, as though he had not heard my question, he exclaimed, "We all say dis storm comee tro' capt'n being wicked man! Tankee de Lor'! we hab no eat pork! Tankee de Lor'! we hab no eat pork!"

He bared his gleaming teeth, as though in the anguish of

cold, and shook his small clinched fist at the skylight. I sat down and lighted a pipe, and, having been somewhat chilled by waiting out in the wet of the quarter-deck for Punmeamootty to bring the lantern, I slided and clawed my way round to Captain Bunting's locker for a bottle of rum that lay within. As I did this, the companion door opened, and down came the skipper. The wind and the wet had twisted his whiskers into lines like lengths of rope. I could have burst into a laugh at the sight of this singular face, framed in the streaming thatch and flannel ear-protectors of his sou'wester. The water poured from his oil-skins as he came to a stand at the end of the table, grabbing it, and looking about him.

"What's all that?" cried he, pointing with a fat forefinger to the mess on deck. This was addressed to Punmeamootty, but I answered, flinging the surliest note I could manage into my voice, which I had to raise into a shout, "An accident. This is a beast of a ship, sir! No barge could make worse weather of a breeze of wind."

I let fall the lid of the locker, and sat upon it, poising the bottle of rum, and blowing a great cloud with my pipe.

"Where is Miss Nielsen?" he exclaimed.

"Gone to bed," I answered. "Punmeamootty, reach me a glass out of that rack."

The man, in taking the tumbler, reeled to a violent heel of the deck, and let it fall.

"D—n it," roared the captain, "you clumsy son of a hog! What more damage is to be done?" His sudden passion made his fixed smile extraordinarily grotesque. "Get a basket and pick up that stuff, and bear a hand!" he thundered. "Has Miss Helga a light?"

"Yes," I answered. "I have seen to that."

"But she may fall—she may let the lantern drop!"

"She is a better sailor than you," I called out; "she knows how to keep her feet. Punmeamootty! a tumbler, if you please, before you begin picking up that stuff."

"I must see that Miss Nielsen's lantern is safe," said the captain; and he was coming forward as though to pass through the cuddy door. I sprung to my feet and confronted him on widely stretched legs.

"No man," said I, "enters Miss Nielsen's sleeping quarters while she and I remain in this ship."

He stared at me with twenty emotions working in his face. His countenance then changed. I perceived him glance at the bottle of rum that I held by the neck, and that I was just in the temper to let him have fair between his eyes had he at-

tempted to shove past me. I believe he thought I had been drinking.

"I can assure you," he exclaimed, with a violent reaching out of his mind, so to speak, in the direction of his regular and familiar blandness, "that Miss Nielsen's privacy is as sacred to me as to you. Will you go below and see that her light is all right? It is a matter that as much concerns your safety as ours."

Without answering him, I opened the locker, replaced the bottle, and continuing to puff out great clouds of smoke through the excitement under which I labored—for I had been prepared for a hand to hand struggle with him, and my heart beat fast to the resolution of my temper—I quitted the cuddy, with a loud call to Punmeamootty to follow me and replace the hatch.

Whether the colored steward put the hatch on, whether, indeed, he followed me as I bid him, I can not tell. I found the lantern burning bravely and swinging fiercely under the beam, and extinguished it, and lay down completely clothed, with the exception of my boots, shrewdly guessing there would be little sleep for me that night.

That it blew at any time as hard as it had when we were aboard the "Anine" I can not say; enough that the dreadful maddened motions of the old vessel made a truly hideous gale of wind of the weather. Again and again she would tumble off the head of a sea and fall headlong into the yawn of water at the base, heeling over as she fell till you would have believed the line of her masts were parallel with the horizon, and strike herself such a mighty blow when she got to the bottom that you listened, with a thumping heart, for a crackling and a rending noise of timbers to tell you that she was going to pieces like a child's house of cards. It was impossible to sleep; twice I was flung upon my bunk, and came very near to breaking a limb. I called to Helga, and found her awake. I asked her how she did; but, silver-clear and keen as her voice was, I could not catch her answer.

It is likely that toward the small hours of the morning I now and again snatched a few minutes of sleep. From one of these brief spells of slumber I was aroused by the blow of a sea that thrilled like an electric shock through every plank and fastening of the vessel, and to my great joy I observed, as I thought, the faint gray of dawn coloring the dim and weeping glass of the scuttle. I immediately pulled on my boots and made for the hatch, but the cover was on and the darkness was as deep as ever it had been at midnight. I con-

sidered for a minute how I should make myself heard, and groping my way back to my berth I took a loose plank, or bunk-board as it is called, from out of the sea-bedstead, and with it succeeded in raising such a thunder in the hollow cover that in a few minutes it was lifted. The homely, flat, ruddy-cheeked face of Jacob, his head clothed in a somewhat tattered yellow sou'-wester which he had probably borrowed from one of his colored mates forward, looked down upon me through the glimmering square of the aperture.

"Why, blowed, Mr. Tregarthen," cried he, "if Oi didn't think the bark was ashore! But ye'd have had to hammer much louder and much longer before escaping from that rat trap if it hadn't been for me a-sheltering of moyself under this 'ere break."

It was a wild scene indeed to arrive on deck and suddenly view. Furious as was the behavior of the bark, I could have got no notion of the weight of the surge from her capers. A huge swelling, livid, frothing surface—every billow looking to rear to the height of the main-top, where it was shattered and blown into a snow-storm—a heaven of whirling soot: this, in brief, was the picture. The vessel, however, was undamaged aloft. She was lying hove-to under a band of close-reefed topsail, which glanced like a sheet of foam against the stooping dismal dusk of the sky. None of the dark-skinned crew was visible. Jacob roared in my ear that they had been half wild with fear during the the night.

"There's some sort of superstition a-working in them," he shouted; "they've been a-praying and a-praying horrible, arter their fashion. Lucky for the ship that she was snugged before the storm busted. Them poor covies ain't a-going to save their lives when the call comes for them to live or perish."

"Who has the watch?" said I.

"The mate," he answered.

I looked at my watch, and was astonished to find that it was after eight. I had believed the hour to be daybreak, but indeed it was surprising that any light at all should have had power to sift through that storm-laden sky. Helga at this moment showed in the hatch. I took her hand. She looked pale, but her mouth was firm as she swept the boiling, swollen scene with her gaze, holding the deck with feet that seemed to float above the planks.

"What a night it has been!" she cried. "This is a bad ship for bad weather. Hour after hour I have been thinking that she was going to pieces."

I told Jacob to replace the hatch-cover, and the girl and I

entered the cuddy, as it was impossible to converse in the open; while, spite of the parallel on which we reeled, the weight of the wind carried an edge as of a Channel January blast in it. In the comparative shelter of the interior we were able to talk, and I told her how I had behaved to the captain on the previous night.

"Nothing that we can do," said she, "can signify while this weather lasts!"

"No, indeed!" I exclaimed. "We must now pray for the ship to live. Our leaving her is made a twopenny consideration of by this gale."

She rose to look at the tell-tale compass, and returned to my side with a look of concern and a sad shake of the head.

"This must end our dream of Santa Cruz," said she.

"It was an idle dream at the best," I answered.

"Unless it should result in disabling the bark!" she continued. She added with a little passion, as she looked through the cuddy window on to the quarter-deck: "I wish all three masts would go overboard!"

"Leaving the hull sound," said I.

"Yes, yes, leaving the hull sound. I would be content to roll about in this hateful vessel for a whole fortnight if I could be sure of being taken off at the end. Anything, *anything* to terminate this cruel, this ridiculous captivity!"

As these words left her lips the captain came down the companion-steps. He paused on seeing us, as though he had supposed the cuddy empty, and was ashamed to be seen in that figure. The dried white salt lay like flour in his eyes; his whiskers were mere rags of wet hair; a large globule of salt water hung at the end of his nose like a gem worn after the Eastern fashion. He struggled along to where we sat, and extended his hand to Helga. In his most unctuous manner, that contrasted ludicrously with his streaming oil-skins, he expressed the hope that she had slept well, lamented the severity of the gale for her sake, but assured her there was no danger, that the bark was making noble weather of it, and that he expected the wind to moderate before noon. He held her hand while he spoke, despite her visible efforts to withdraw it from his grasp. He then addressed me.

"I have to apologize," he exclaimed, "for a little exhibition of temper last night. I employed an expletive which I am happy to think has not escaped me for years. The provocation was great—the anxieties of the gale—the loss of a foretopmast-staysail—the ruined crockery on deck—a bottle of my valuable cordial-brandy wasted—Punmeamootty's somewhat

insolent stupidity—the most pious mind might be reasonably forgiven for venting itself in the language of the forecastle under the irritation of so many trials! But I offer you my apologies, Mr. Tregarthen, and I hope, sir, that you slept well."

I answered him coldly and with averted eyes, being now resolved to persevere in my assumption of contemptuous dislike, which I also desired he should believe was animated by a determination to punish him when I got him ashore.

He went to his cabin to refresh himself, first taking care to inform us, with a large smile, that he had spent the whole of the night on deck in looking after the vessel, whose safety, he exclaimed, with a significant leer at Helga, "has been rendered extraordinarily precious to me since Monday last."

I now told her—for I had forgotten the incident—how our oily friend had whipped out with a small oath on the previous night.

"So, then, he has humanized himself to you?" said she, laughing.

"It is the only symptom of sincerity I have observed in him," I exclaimed.

He reappeared presently, soaped, shining and smiling, with dried whiskers floating smoke-like, on either hand a purple satin cravat. But the breakfast was to be a poor one that morning. The cook, it seems, could not keep the galley fire alight, and we had to make the best meal we could off a tin of preserved meat and some biscuit and wine and water. The captain was profusely apologetic to Helga, and unctuously ascribed the poverty of the meal to me, who, he said with an air of jocosity, was the cause of half a ham and an excellent piece of beef being rendered unfit for the table. I made no answer to this. Indeed, Helga and I sat like mutes at that table; but the captain talked abundantly, almost wholly addressing himself to the girl. In truth, it was now easy to see that the unfortunate man was head over ears in love with her.

His gaze was a prolonged stare of admiration, and he seemed to find nothing in her behavior to chill or repel him. On the contrary, the more she kept her eyes downward bent, the colder and harder grew her face, the more taciturn she was—again and again not vouchsafing even a monosyllabic answer to him—the more he warmed towards her, the more he encroached in his behavior. If he had any sensibility, it was armor-clad by complacency. I never could have believed that vanity had such power as I here found to sheath so impenetrably the human understanding. Well, thought I to myself,

all this means a voyage for Helga, if not for me. Assuredly he'll not part with her this side of the Cape, and the fool's hope, I thought, as I let my eyes rest on the grinning mask of his countenance, is that he will have won her long before he reaches the parallel of thirty-four degrees south, though he has to make the most of every calm and of every gale of wind to achieve his end.

I will not attempt to follow the hours of that day. They were little more than a repetition of our experiences in the "Anine." The captain came and went, but for the most part Helga and I remained in the cabin. The gale somewhat moderated at noon, as the skipper had predicted, but it still blew too hard to make sail on the ship, and she lay hove-to in the trough, sickening me to the inmost recesses of my soul with her extravagant somersaults and prodigious falls and upheavals. Somewhere about half past four that afternoon, on looking through the cuddy window, I saw Jacob smoking a pipe in the shelter of the projection of the captain's and mate's cabins. I thought I would keep him company, and, having cut up a pipe of tobacco for myself, I quitted Helga, who showed a disposition to doze, and joined the boatman.

The wind made a great howling aloft, and the thunderous wash of the breaking waters against the vessel's side put a wild note of storm into the shrieking and hissing and hooting of the rigging. But it was fairly calm in the recess, and we conversed very easily. I asked Jacob, while I pointed over the lee-rail at the huge, dark-green, froth-laced backs of the seas rushing from the ship in headlong race, what would be his thoughts of this weather if he were aboard the "Early Morn."

"Why, the lugger 'ud be doing as well as this here bucket, any way," said he.

"Captain Bunting," said I, "will think that you are not half grateful enough for your deliverance."

"He is a proper gentleman!" he exclaimed. "Abraham swears there ain't the likes of him afloat for politeness; but his crew b'ent of Abey's mind, I'm afraid. Looks to me as if there's going to be trouble."

"Anything fresh happened?" I asked.

"It's all along of this matter of sarving out pork to them chaps as won't eat it, Mr. Tregarthen. The mate gave 'em pork again to-day. There ain't no galley-fire alight, so it's all the same to them colored chaps whether it be pork or beef. But it's the principle of it what's a-sticking in their gizzards. Nakier says to me, 'It would be allee de same if de water boil,'

says he, 'for it is eider pork or no meat,' by which he sinnified that if be so as it was fine weather and the galley-fire goin', the men's dinner to-day 'ud be pork or nothen. Now, Mr. Tregarthen, Oi allow that they don't mean to keep all on enduring of this here treatment."

"What have you noticed to make you suppose this?" said I, with a glance along the deserted decks, dark with sobbing wet and often shrouded forward by vast showers of flying spray.

"Well," he answered, "all the darkies has been a-sitting below saving the chap at the wheel, there being nothen for them to do on deck. I was in the fo'k'sle when Nakier comes down and tells the men that it was to be pork again. I couldn't understand him, for he spoke his own language, but guessed what was up when I heerd the hullabaloo his words raised. They all began to sing out together in a sort of screeching voice like the row made by a crowd of women a-quarreling and a-pulling the hair out of each other's heads up a halley. Some skipped about in their rage as though there was a fiddle going. One chap, him with a face like a decayed lemon, he outs with his knife and falls a-stabbing of the atmosphere; and Oi tell ye, Mr. Tregarthen, when I saw that I just drawed my legs up into my bunk and tried to make myself as little as possible with the hope of escaping his hobservation, for damme! thought I, if that there article's a-going to run amuck, as I've heerd tell the likes of him is in the habit of doing, strike me dark, thinks Oi, if I be'nt the fust man he'll fall foul on!"

"What was said?" I asked.

"Why, ask yourself the question, sir. What do monkeys say when they start a-yelling? Who's to know what they said?"

"How do you know, then, that it was the serving-out of the pork again that excited them?" said I.

"Whoy, that there Nakier told me so arterwards."

"Ha!" I exclaimed; "and for how long did they go on shrieking, as you say, and brandishing their knives?"

"It was over wonderful soon," he answered. "Nakier looked on while they was all a-shouting together, then said something, and it was like blowing the head off a pint o' ale —nothen remained but flatness. They just stood and listened while Nakier spouted, and ye should ha' seen 'em a-nodding and a-grimacing, and brandishing their arms and slapping their legs; but they never said nothen; they just took and listened. Tell 'ee, Mr. Tregarthen, the suddenness of it, and

the looks of 'em was something to bring the pusperation out of the pores of a Polar bear."

"What does Abraham think?" said I.

"Whoy, I dunno how it is, he don't seem to obsarve—appears to find nothen to take to heart. He's growed a bit consequential, being now what the skipper would call a orficer, and though he sleeps forrard his feelings is aft. 'Tis mere growling, he thinks, with the fellows. But there's moren't than that," said he, striking a match and catching the flame of it in his clasped hand, and lighting his pipe as easily as if there were not a breath of air stirring.

"The lunatic of a captain has his eyes in his head," said I, thinking aloud rather than conversing. "If he can't see the mischief his mad notion of conversion is breeding, it is not for me to point it out. In fact, I heartily wish the Malays would seize the bark and sail her to Madeira or the Canaries. Is it not abominable that Miss Nielsen and I should be carried away to the Cape of Good Hope against our will by that long-whiskered rogue?" signifying the captain by a backward motion of my head at the cabin.

"Abraham was a-telling me about this here traverse. The skipper's gone and fallen in love with the young lady, ain't he?" said Jacob, with a grin overspreading his flat face.

"Yes," said I, "and hopes by keeping her aboard to win her heart. The dolt!"

"Dunno about *dolt*, sir!" exclaimed Jacob. "She's a nice looking young gal, is Miss Nielsen, and, I allow, just the sort of wife as a shipmaster would live heasy vith."

"You argue as vilely as Abraham," said I, looking at him angrily. "Will you pretend that this captain is not acting outrageously in detaining the young lady on board his ship—imprisoning her, in short—for that is what it comes to?"

A little look of intelligence gave a new expression to the flat-faced fellow's smile as he respectfully surveyed me.

"Well, sir—I don't blame you, I can't blame you," he exclaimed. "I've kep' company myself. I was for five years along with as nice a gal as was ever seen in Deal, a-courting and a-courting, and always too pore to git spliced. I know what the passion of jealousy is. She took up with a corporal of marines, and, I tell ye, I suffered. It came roight, then it went wrong again, and it ended in her marrying a measly little slice of a chap, named Billy Tusser, who'd saved a bit out o' sprattin' and hovellin'. I can't blame 'ee, sir."

It was not a matter to pursue with this worthy man, whose small intelligence lay too deep to be worth boring for; so I

dropped the subject, and talked afresh of the colored crew, and continued lingering till I could not have told how long our chat lasted. Though the gale was much less hard than it had blown down to noon, it was still a very violent wind, and the sea as wild as ever it had been, with the shadow of the evening now to add a darker tinge of gloom to the whirl of stooping, sooty heaven, under which every head of surge broke like a flash of ghastly light. The vessel was a strangely desolate picture—not a living creature to be seen forward, the decks half drowned, water sluicing white off the forecastle rim, or blowing up into the wind from off that raised deck in bursts of crystalline smoke, like corkscrew leapings of fine snow to the hurl of a blast roaring across a wintery moor. The slack gear curved black with wet; again and again the vessel would pitch into the bow sea till the spreading froth made by the massive plunge of her round bows rose to her forecastle rail. I had had enough of the cold and the wet; the cheerless picture of the bark and the ocean, too, was unspeakably depressing, and, with a glance round at the near horizon of broken creaming waters on which nothing showed, I bestowed a nod of farewell on Jacob, and re-entered the cuddy.

Captain Bunting was sitting close to Helga. The light was so weak in this interior that I had to peer a little to make sure that it was the captain, for the dim figure might well have been the mate's. Helga was at the extreme end of the locker, as though she had uneasily worked her way from his side while they sat; but he had followed, and was now close, and her next and only step to get rid of him must be to rise. He was addressing her very earnestly when I entered; his whiskers floated from his cheeks as he bent toward her. Charged as the cuddy was with the complaining sounds of the laboring fabric, speech was very easy within it, nor was it necessary to raise the voice. Indeed, the interior had the effect of a hush upon my ears, coming, as I did fresh from the shriek and thunder of the weather out on deck.

On seeing me the captain instantly broke off, sat up, and called out:

"Well, and how are things looking on deck?"

Helga rose and went to the little window against the door.

"The weather could not be worse," I answered, with the air and tone of sullenness I had resolved on. "Your ship is too old and squab for such a conflict."

"She is old, but she is a stout ship," he answered. "She will be afloat when scores of what you might consider beauties have vanished."

"I think not," said I, looking toward Helga, and wondering what the man had been saying to her.

"Let us hope," he exclaimed, lifting a great pilot coat from the locker and struggling into it, "that the necessity for your remaining here will not last very much longer. I should have expected handsomer treatment at your hands, Mr. Tregarthen."

"I do not know what you can find to base such an expectation on," I cried. "Your detention of us is cruel, and, as I hope and believe, punishable. But there is no good in discussing that matter with you here and now. I have merely to beg that we may be as strangers while we are so unfortunate as to be together in the same ship."

He drew his sou'-wester down upon his head, surveying me in the meanwhile; but I witnessed no malevolence in his regard; indeed, I may say no trace of temper. His enduring smile lay broad with such expansion, indeed, as gave an air of elation to his face.

"No," said he, wagging his head, while he slipped the elastic band of his sou'-wester behind his whisker, "we will not live together as strangers, as you desire. Brotherly love is still practicable, and nothing that you can say or do, my young friend, shall dissuade me from cultivating it. That we shall be long together I do not believe," he added, with a significance that astonished me and sent my eyes askant at Helga, whose back was still upon us. "Meanwhile endeavor to be contented. To have content is to have all, and to have all is to be richer than the richest."

He inclined his sou'-westered head in an odd benedictory grotesque nod or bow, and, with a half pause in his manner as though he would call some speech to Helga, turned on his heel and went on deck.

"What has he been saying, Helga?"

She looked round, and, finding the captain gone, came to my side and locked her fingers upon my arm. She had drawn to me with a pale face, but the blood flushed her throat and cheeks as she let fall her eyes from mine. I had never before thought her so sweet as she showed at that moment. She was without a hat, and her short fair hair glimmered on her head in the gathering gloom of the evening with a sheen like the glancing of bright amber. My memory gave me a thought full of beauty—a wild caprice of sentiment at such a time!

> The freshness of new hay is on thy hair,
> And the withdrawing innocence of home
> Within thine eye.

"What has he been saying to you, Helga?"

"That he loves me," she answered, now fixing her artless, tender gaze upon me, though her blush lingered.

"A fine time to tell you such a thing! Does that sort of sea-captain wait for a gale of wind to propose to a girl?" I exclaimed, with a sudden irritation of jealousy tingling through me, and I looked at her closely and suspiciously.

"I wanted to be angry, Hugh, but could not," said she. "I hate the man, yet I could not be angry with him. He spoke of his daughter—he did not talk through his nose—he did not cant at all. Is 'cant' the right word? I felt sorry; I had not the heart to answer him in rudeness, and to have risen and left him while he was speaking would have been rudeness."

I made a slight effort to disengage my arm from her clasp.

"He told me—no doubt you heard him," said I—"he told me he believed there would be no necessity to keep me long. He is a clever man—a shrewd man. Well, after this I shall believe in all the proverbs about women."

"What do you mean, Hugh?" she exclaimed in a startled voice, letting fall her hands and staring at me.

"What do *you* mean?"

"Why, that I am sorry for the man, and hate him."

"Oh! if you keep sorry long, you will soon cease to hate him."

"No, no!" she cried with a little passion, making as if to clasp my arm afresh and then shrinking. "I could not help his coming here and speaking to me."

"That is true."

"Oh, Hugh, why are you angry?"

Her gaze pleaded, her lips twitched, even as she looked at me her blue eyes filled. Her grieved, pretty face—her wistful, tender, tearful face must have transformed my temper into impassioned pity, into self-reproach, in tokeen self-resentment, even had there been solid ground for vexation. I took her hand and lifted it to my lips.

"Forgive me, Helga; we have been much together. Our association and your father's dying words make me think of you as mine until—until—the long and short of it is, Helga, I am jealous!"

An expression of delight entered and vanished from her face. She stood thoughtfully looking down on the deck. Just then Punmeamootty entered to prepare the table for supper, and Helga again went to the cabin window and stood looking out, lightly, with unconscious ease and grace, swaying to the

stormy heave of the deck with her hands clasped behind her in a posture of meditation.

CHAPTER XXII.

A NIGHT OF HORROR.

THE gale broke on the morning of Thursday, the second of November. The compacted heaven of cloud scattered in swelling cream-colored masses; the sun shone out of the wide lakes of moist blue, and the sea turned from the cold and sickly gray of the stormy hours into a rich sapphire, with a high swell and a plentiful chasing of foaming billows. By four o'clock in the afternoon the ocean had smoothed down into a tropical expanse of quietly rising and falling waters, with the hot sun sliding westward and the bark stemming the sea afresh under all cloths which could be piled upon her, the wind a small breeze, about west, and the sea-line a flawless girdle.

The evening that followed was one of quiet beauty. There was a young moon overhead, with power enough to drop a little trickling of silver into the dark sea under her; the clouds had vanished, and the stars shone brightly with a very abundant showering of meteoric lights above the trucks of the silent swaying masts.

As we paced the deck the captain joined us. Short of going to our respective cabins there was no means of getting rid of him; so we continued to patrol the planks, with him at Helga's side, talking, talking—oh, Heaven! how he talked! His manner was distressingly caressing. Helga kept hold of my arm, and meanwhile I, true to that posture I had maintained for the past three days, listened or sent my thoughts elsewhere, rarely speaking. In the course of his ceaseless chatter he struck upon the subject of his crew and their victuals, and told us he was sorry that we were not present when Nakier and two other colored men came aft into the cuddy after he had taken sights and gone below.

"I am certain," he exclaimed, smiting his leg, "that I have made them reflective! I believe I could not mistake. Nakier in particular listened with attention, and looked at his mates with an expression as though conviction were being slowly borne in upon him."

I pricked up my ears at this, for here was a matter that had been causing me some anxious thought, and I broke away from my sullen, resentful behavior to question him.

"What brought the men aft?"

"The same tiresome story," he answered, speaking loudly,

and seemingly forgetful of or indifferent to the pair of yellow ears which, I might warrant him, were thirstily listening at the helm. "They ask for beef, for beef, for nothing but beef, and I say yes—beef one day, pork another; beef for your bodies and pork for your souls. I shall conquer them; and what a triumph it will be! Though I should make no further progress with them, yet I could never feel too grateful for a decisive victory over a gross, imbecile superstition that, like a shutter, though it be one of many, helps to keep out the light."

He then went on to tell us what he had said, how he had reasoned, and I shall not soon forget the unctuous, self-satisfied chuckle which broke from the folds of his throat as he paused before asking Helga what she thought of that as an example of pure logic. I listened, wondering that a man who could talk as he did should be crazy enough to attempt so perilous an experiment as the attempting to win his crew over to his own views of religion by as dangerous an insult as his fanatical mind could have lighted upon. It was the more incomprehensible to me in that the fellow had started upon his crude missionary scheme when there were but two whites in the ship to eleven believers in the Prophet.

I waited until his having to fetch breath enabled me to put in a word. I then briefly and quietly related what had passed in the forecastle as described to me by Jacob Minnikin.

"And what then, Mr. Tregarthen?" said he, and I seemed to catch a sneer threading, so to speak, his bland utterance: the moon gave but little light as I have said, and I could not see his face. "When a man starts on the work of converting, he must not be afraid."

"Your men have knives—they are devils, so I have heard, when aroused—you may not be afraid, but you have no right to provoke peril for us," I said.

"The cockswain of a life-boat should have a stout heart," he exclaimed. "Miss Nielsen, do not be alarmed by your courageous friend's apprehension. My duty is exceedingly simple. I must do what is right. Right is divinely protected," and I saw by the pose of his head that he cast his eyes up at the sky.

I nudged Helga as a hint not to speak, just breathlessly whispering, "He is not to be reasoned with."

It was a little before ten o'clock that night when the girl retired to her cabin. The captain, addressing her in a simpering, lover-like voice, had importuned her to change her cabin. She needed to grow fretful before her determined refusals silenced him. He entered his berth when she had gone, and I

took my pipe to enjoy a quiet smoke on deck. After the uproar of the past three days, the serenity of the night was exquisitely soothing. The moon shone in a curl of silver; the canvas soared in pallid visible spaces starward; there was a pleasant rippling sound of gently stirred waters alongside, and the soft westerly night-wind fanned the cheek with the warmth of an infant's breath. The decks ran darkling forward; the shadow of the courses flung a dye that was deeper than the gloom of the hour betwixt the rails, and nothing stirred save the low-lying stars which slipped up and down past the forecastle rail under the crescent of the foresail as the bark courtesied.

Nevertheless, though I could not see the men, I heard a delicate sound of voices proceeding from the block of darkness where the forecastle front lay. Mr. Jones had charge of the watch, and, on my stepping aft to the wheel, I found Jacob grasping the spokes, having relieved the helm at four bells—ten o'clock. He was not to be accosted while on that duty; and my dislike of the mate had not been lessened by the few words which had passed between us since the day when the Cape steamer had gone by, and by my observation of his fawning behavior to the captain. I briefly exclaimed that it was a fine night, received some careless, drowsy answer from him, and, with pipe betwixt my lips, lounged lonely on the lee side of the deck, often overhanging the rail, and viewing the sea-glow as it crept by, with my mind full of Helga, of my home, of our experiences so far, and of what might lie before us.

I was startled out of a fit of musing by the forecastle bell ringing five. The clear, keen chimes floated like an echo from the sea, and I caught a faint reverberation of them in the hollow canvas. It was half past ten. I knocked the ashes out of my pipe, and, going on to the quarter-deck, dropped through the hatch.

The lantern swinging in the corridor betwixt the berths was burning. I lightly called to Helga to know if all was well with her, but she was silent, and, as I might suppose, asleep. I put out the light, as my custom now was, and, partially unclothing myself in the dark, got into my bunk and lay for a little watching the dance of a phantom star or two in the dim black round of the scuttle close against my head, sleepily wondering how long this sort of life was to continue, what time was to pass, and how much was to happen before I should be restored to the comfort of my own snug bedroom at home; and thus musing, too drowsy perhaps for melancholy, I fell asleep.

I was awakened by some one beating heavily upon the bulkhead of the next-door cabin.

"Mr. Tregarthen! Mr. Tregarthen!" roared a voice; then thump! thump! went the blows of a massive fist or handspike. "For Gawd a'mighty's sake wake up and turn out!—there's murder a-doing! Which is your cabin?"

I recognized the voice of Abraham, disguised as it was by horror and by the panting of his breath.

The exclamation, "There's murder a-doing!" collected my wits in a flash, and I was wide awake and conscious of the man's meaning ere he had fairly delivered himself of his cry.

"I am here—I will be with you!" I shouted, and, without pausing further to attire myself, dropped from my bunk and made with outstretched hands for the door, which I felt for and opened.

It was pitch dark in this passage betwixt the cabins, without even the dim gleam the porthole in the berth offered to the eye to rest on.

"Where are you, Abraham?" I cried.

"Here, sir!" he exclaimed, almost in my ear, and, lifting my hand, I touched him.

"The crew's up!" he cried. "They've killed the mate, and by this time, I allow, the capt'n's done for."

"Where's Jacob?"

"Gawd He only knows, sir!"

"Are you armed? Do you grip anything?"

"Nothen, nothen. I run without stopping to arm myself. I'll tell ye about it—but it's awful to be a-talking in this here blackness with murder happening close by."

He still panted as from heavy recent exertion, and his voice faltered as though he were sinking from a wound.

"What is it?" cried the clear voice of Helga from her berth.

"Open your door!" I said, knowing that it was her practice to shoot the bolt. "All is darkness here. Let us in—dress yourself by feeling for your clothes—the Malays have risen upon the captain and mate—it may be our turn next, and we must make a stand in your cabin. Hush!"

In the interval of her quitting her bunk to open the door, I strained my ears. Nothing was to be heard save near and distant straining noises rising out of the vessel as she heeled on the long westerly swell. But then we were deep down, with two decks for any noise made on the poop to penetrate.

"The door is open," said Helga.

I had one hand on Abraham's arm, and, feeling with the other, I guided him into Helga's berth, the position of which,

as he had never before been in this part of the vessel, he could not have guessed. I then closed the door and bolted it.

"Dress yourself quickly, Helga!" said I, talking to her in the mine-like blindness of this interior that was untouched by the star or two that danced in her cabin window as in mine.

"Tell me what has happened!" she exclaimed.

"Speak, Abraham!" said I.

"Lor'! but Oi don't seem able to talk without a light," he answered. "Ain't there no lantern here? If there's a lantern, I've got three or four loocifers in my pocket."

"Hist!" I cried. "I hear footsteps."

We held our breath: all was still. Some sound had fallen upon my ear. It resembled the slapping of planks with naked feet to my fancy, that had been terrified by Abraham's sudden horrible report, before there was time for my muscles and nerves to harden into full waking strength.

"What d'ye hear?" hoarsely whispered Abraham.

"It was imagination. Helga, can we light the lantern?"

She answered yes—she was ready.

"Strike a match, Abraham, that I may see where the lantern hangs," said I.

He did so, holding the flame in his fist. I opened the door, whipped out, took down the lantern and darted in again, bolting the door anew with a thrill of fear following upon the haste I had made through imagination of one of those yellow-skins crouching outside with naked knife in hand. I swiftly lighted the lantern, and placed it in Helga's bunk. Abraham was of an ashen paleness, and I knew my own cheeks to be bloodless.

"Ought we to fear the crew?" cried Helga. "We have not wronged them. They will not want our lives."

"Dorn't trust 'em, dorn't trust 'em!" exclaimed Abraham. "Ain't there nothen here to sarve as weapons?" he added, rolling his eyes around the cabin.

"What is the story? Tell it now, man, tell it!" I cried, in a voice vehement with nerves.

He answered, speaking low, very hastily and hoarsely:

"Oi'd gone below at eight bells. Oi found Nakier haranguing some of the men as was in the fok'sle; but he broke off when he see me. I smoked a pipe, and then tarned in and slep' for an hour or so; then awoke and spied five or six of the chaps a-whispering together up in a corner of the fok'sle. They often looked moy way, but there worn't loight enough to let 'em know that my eyes was open, and I lay secretly a-watching 'em, smelling mischief. Then a couple of 'em went on deck, and the rest lay down. Nothen happened for

some time. Meanwhile Oi lay woide awake, listening and watching. 'Twas about seven bells, I reckon, when some one —Oi think it was Nakier—calls softly down through the hatch, and instantly all the fellows, who as I could ha' swore was sound asleep, dropped from their hammocks like one man, and the fok'sle was empty. I looked round to make sure that it were empty, then sneaks up and looks aft with my chin no higher than the coaming. I heered a loud shriek, and a cry of 'Oh, God! Oh, God! Help! Help!' and now, guessing what was happening, and believing that the tastin' of blood would drive them fellows mad, and that Oi should be next if Jacob worn't already gone, him being at the wheel, as I might calculate by his not being forrard, Oi took and run, and here Oi am."

He passed the back of his hand over his brow, following the action with a fling of his fingers from the wrist; and, indeed, it was now to be seen that his face streamed with sweat.

"Do you believe they have murdered the captain?" cried Helga.

"I dorn't doubt it—I can't doubt it. There seemed two gangs of 'em. Oi run for my life, and yet I see two gangs," answered Abraham.

"Horrible!" exclaimed the girl, looking at me with fixed eyes, yet she seemed more shocked than frightened.

"Did not I foresee this?" I exclaimed. "Where were your senses, man—you who lived among them, eat and drank with them? It would be bad enough if they were white men; but how stands our case, do you think, in a ship seized by savages who have been made to hate us for our creed and for the color of our skins?"

"Hark!" cried Helga.

We strained our hearing, but nothing was audible to me saving my heart, that beat loud in my ears.

"I thought I heard the sound of a splash," she exclaimed.

"If they should ha' done for my mate, Jacob!" cried Abraham. "As the Lord's good, 'twill be too hard. Fust wan, then another, and now nowt but me left of our little company as left Deal but a day or tew ago, as it seems when Oi looks back."

"Are we to perish here like poisoned rats in a hole?" said I. "If they clap the hatch-cover on, what's to become of us?"

"Who among them can navigate the ship?" asked Helga.

"Ne'er a one," replied Abraham; "that I can tell 'ee from recollecting of the questions Nakier's asted me from toime to toime."

"But if the body of them should come below," cried I, "and force that door—as easily done as blowing out that light there—are we to be butchered with empty hands, looking at them without a lift of our arms, unless it be to implore mercy? Here are two of us—Englishmen! Are we to be struck down as if we were women?"

"There are three of us!" said Helga.

"What are our weapons?" I exclaimed, wildly sweeping the little hole of a cabin with my eyes. "They have their knives!"

"Give me the handling of 'em one arter the other," said Abraham, fetching a deep breath and then spitting on his hands, "and I'll take the whole 'leven whilst ye both sit down and look on. But all of them at wanst—all dronk with rage and snapping round a man as if he was a sheep and they wolves—" he breathed deeply again, slowly shaking his head.

"The planks in that bunk are loose," said I, "but what can we do with boards?"

"Hugh, I will go on deck!" suddenly exclaimed Helga.

"You?" cried I. "No, indeed! You will remain here. There must be two of us for them to deal with before the third can be come at!"

"I will go on deck!" she repeated. "I have less cause to fear them than you. They know that I am acquainted with navigation—they have always looked at me with kindness in their faces. Let me go and talk to them!"

She made a step to the door—I gripped her arm, and brought her to my side and held her.

"What is to be done is for us two men to do!" said I. "We must think, and we must wait."

"Hugh, let me go!" she cried. "I am certain they will listen to me, and I shall be able to make terms. Unless there be a navigator among them, what can they do with the ship in this great ocean?" She struggled, crying again: "Let me go to them, Hugh!"

"Dorn't you do nothen of the sort, sir!" exclaimed Abraham. "What'd happen? They'd tarn to and lock her up until they'd made an end of you and me, and then she'd be left alone aboard this wessel—alone, I mean, with eleven yaller savages. Gord preserve us! If you let go of her, sir, *Oi* shall have to stop the road."

There was something of deliberateness in his speech: his English spirit was coming back with the weakening of the horror that had filled him when he first came rushing below.

Some one knocked lightly on the door. At the same instant

my eye was taken by the glance of lamp or candle flame in the opening in the bulkhead overlooking the narrow passage.

"Hush!" cried I.

The knock was repeated. It was a very soft tapping, as though made by a timid knuckle.

"Who is there?" I shouted, gathering myself together with a resolution to leap upon the first dark throat that showed; for I believed this soft knocking—this soundless approach—a Malay ruse, and my veins tingled with the madness that enters the blood of a man in the supreme moment whose expiry means life or death to him.

"It is me, master! Open, master! It is allee right!"

"That's Nakier!" exclaimed Abraham.

"Who is it?" I cried.

"Me, sah—Nakier. It is allee right, I say. Do not fear. Our work is done. We wish to speakee with you, and be friend."

"How many of you are there outside?" I called.

"No man but Nakier," he answered.

"How are we to know that?" bawled Abraham. "The most of you have naked feet. A whole army of ye might sneak aft, and no one guess it."

"I swear Nakier is alone. Lady, you shall trust Nakier. Our work is done; it is allee right, I say. See, you t'ink I am not alone; you are afraid of my knife; go a leetle way back—I trow my knife to you."

We recoiled to the bulkhead, and Abraham roared "Heave!" The knife fell upon the deck close to my feet. I pounced upon it as a cat upon a mouse, but dropped it with a cry. "Oh, God, it is bloody!"

"Give it me!" exclaimed Abraham, in a hoarse shout; "it'll be bloodier yet, now I've got it, if that there Nakier's a-playing false."

Grasping it in his right hand, he slipped back the bolt, and opened the door. The sensations of a life-time of wild experiences might have been concentrated in that one instant. I had heard and read so much about the treachery of the Malay that when Abraham flung open the little cabin door I was prepared for a rush of dusky shapes, and to find myself grappling—but not for life, since death I knew to be certain, armed as every creature of them was with the deadly blade of the sailor's sheath knife. Instead—erect in the corridor, immediately abreast of our cabin, holding a bull's-eye lamp in his hand, stood Nakier, who on seeing us put the light on the deck, and

saluted us by bringing both hands to his brow. Abraham put his head out.

"There ain't nobody here but Nakier!" he cried.

"What have you done?" I exclaimed, looking at the man, who in the combined light showed plainly, and whose handsome features had the modest look, the prepossessing air I had found when my gaze first rested on him in this ship.

"The captain is kill—Pallunappachelly, he kill him. The mate is kill—with this han'." He held up his arm.

"Where's moy mate?" thundered Abraham.

"No man touch him. Jacob, he allee right. Two only." He held up two fingers. "The captain and Misser Jones. They treat us like dog, and we bite like dog!" he added, showing his teeth, but with nothing whatever of fierceness or wildness in his grin.

"What do you want?" I repeated.

"We wantchee you come speak with us. We allee swear on de Koran not to hurt you but to serve you, and you serve we."

I stood staring, not knowing how to act.

"He is to be trusted," said Helga.

"But the others?" I said.

"They can do nothing without us."

"Without *one* of us. But the others!"

"We may trust them," she repeated with an accent of conviction.

Nakier's eyes, gleaming in the lantern-light, were bent upon us as we whispered. He perceived my irresolution, and, once again putting down the bull's-eye lamp on the deck, he clasped and extended his hands in a posture of impassioned entreaty.

"We allee swear we no hurt you!" he cried in a voice of soft entreaty that was absolutely sweet with the melody of its tones; "dat beautiful young lady—oh! I would kill here," he cried, gesticulating as though he would stab his heart, "before dat good, kind, clever lady be harm. Oh! you may trust us! We hab done our work. Mr. Wise, he be capt'n; you be gentleman—passengaire; you live upstair and be very much comfortable. De beautiful young lady, she conduct dis ship to Afric. Oh! no, no, no! you are allee safe. My men shall trow down dere knives upon de table when you come, and we swear on de Koran to be your friend, and you be friend to we."

"Let's go along with him, Mr. Tregarthen," said Abraham. "Nakier, I shall stick to this here knife. Where's moy mate Jacob? If 'ere a man of ye's hurted him—"

"It is no time to threaten," I whispered, angrily, shoving past him. "Come, Helga! Nakier, pick up that bull's-eye

and lead the way, and, Abraham, follow with that lantern, will you?"

In silence we gained the hatch. It lay open. Nakier sprung through it, and, one after the other, we ascended. The wind had fallen scantier since I was on deck last, and though the loftier canvas was asleep, silent as carved marble, and spreading in spectral wanness under the bright stars, there was no weight in the wind to hold steady the heavy folds of the fore and main courses, which swung in and out with the dull sound of distant artillery as the bark leaned from side to side. The cuddy lamp was brightly burning, and the first glance I sent through the open door showed me the whole of the crew, as I for the instant supposed—though I afterward found that one of them was at the wheel—standing at the table, ranged on either hand of it, all as motionless as a company of soldiers drawn up on parade. Every dark face was turned our way, and never was shipboard picture more startling and impressive than this one of stirless figures, dusky fiery eyes, knitted brows, most of the countenances hideous, but all various in their ugliness. Their caps and queer headgear lay in a heap upon the table. Nakier entered and paused, with a look to us to follow. Helga was fearlessly pressing forward. I caught her by the hand and cried to Nakier:

"Those men are all armed."

He rounded upon them, and uttered some swift feverish sentence in his native tongue. In a moment every man whipped out his knife from the sheath in which it lay buried at the hip, and placed it upon the table. Nakier again spoke, pronouncing the words with a passionate gesture, on which Punmeamootty gathered the knives into one of the caps and handed them to Nakier, who brought the cap to Helga and placed it at her feet. On his doing this Abraham threw the blood-stained knife he held into the cap.

It was at that moment we were startled by a cry of "Below, there!"

"Whoy, it's Jacob!" roared Abraham, and stepping backward and looking straight up, he shouted, "Jacob, ahoy! Where are ye, mate?"

"Up in the maintop pretty nigh dead," came down the leather-lunged response from the silence up above.

"Thank Gawd you're alive!" cried Abraham. "It's all roight now—it's all roight now."

"Who's a-going to make me believe it?" cried Jacob.

I stared up, and fancied I could just perceive the black nob of his head projected over the rim of the top.

"You can come down, Jacob," I cried. "All danger, I hope, is over."

"Danger over?" he bawled. "Whoy, they've killed the mate and chucked him overboard, and if I hadn't taken to my heels and jumped aloft they'd have killed me."

"No, no—not true; not true, sah!" shrieked Nakier. "Come down, Jacob! It is allee right!"

"Where's the captain?" cried Jacob.

"Him overboard!" answered Nakier. "It is allee right, I say!"

A shudder ran through me as I glanced at the cabin which the captain had occupied. I can not express how the horror of this sudden, shocking, bloody tragedy was heightened by Nakier's cool and easy acceptance of the deed, as though the two men whom he and his had slain were less to his sympathies than had they been a couple of fowls whose necks had been wrung.

"Pray come down, Jacob!" said Helga, sending her voice clear as a bell into the silent, towering heights. "You, as well as Abraham, are to be known as an Englishman."

This little scornful stroke, which was extremely happy in that it was unintelligible to Nakier and the others, had the desired effect.

"Why, if it *is* all right, then I suppose it *be* all right," I heard Jacob say, and a few moments after his figure, with 'longshore clumsiness, came slowly down the rigging.

As he sprung from the bulwark rail on to the deck he whipped off his cap and dashed it down on to the planks, and with the utmost agitation of voice and manner, danced around his cap as he vociferated while he flourished his fist at Abraham:

"Now, what did Oi say? All along I've been a-telling ye that that there pork job was a-going to get our throats cut. Whoy didn't ye stop it? Whoy didn't ye tell the capt'n what you seed and knowed? Froight! Whoy, I moight ha' died in that there top and rolled overboards, and what yarn was ye going to give my missis as to my hending, if so be as ever ye got ashore at Deal agin?"

He continued to shout after this fashion, meanwhile tumbling and reeling about his cap as though it were a mark for him upon the theater of this deck on which to act his part. But though it appeared a very ecstasy of rage in him, the outbreak seemed wholly due to revulsion of feeling. Nakier stood motionlessly eying him; the others also remained at table, all preserving their sentinel postures. At last the fellow made an end, put his cap on, and was silent, breathing hard,

"Will you come in, sah? Will you enter, lady? Misser Wise, it is allee right. Come along, Jacob, my mate!"

Thus saying, Nakier re-entered the cuddy, and the four of us followed him. There was a dark stain on the bare plank close against the coaming or ledge of the door of the captain's cabin. It was the short, wild, startled sideways spring which Abraham gave that caused me to look at it. The very soul within me seemed to shrink at the sight. Nakier exclaimed:

"It is easy to scrape out," motioning as though he scraped with his little delicately shaped hand. He then addressed one of the fellows at the table, who nodded, sweeping the air with his arm as he did so.

It now occurred to me with the marvelous swiftness of thought that the cap containing the men's knives still lay upon the deck where Nakier had lodged it at Helga's feet, and the instant motion of my mind was to return to the quarter-deck, pick the cap up, and heave it over the rail. But I reflected that not only might an act of this sort enrage the crew by losing them their knives—it would also imply profound distrust on our part. I also considered that, if they designed to kill us, they would be able to manage that business very well without their knives—for there was the carpenter's tool-chest forward which would supply them with plenty of deadly weapons, not to mention the cabin knives, which Punmeamootty had charge of, and of which several were at all times to be found in the galley. All this passed through my mind in the space that a man might count five in, so amazing is the velocity of imagination; and my resolution was formed in this matter even while I continued to measure the few steps which separated the table from the cuddy door.

Nakier went to the head of the table, and, putting his hand upon the captain's chair, exclaimed, bowing with inimitable grace to Helga as he spoke:

"Will de sweet mees sit here?"

She passed along the little file of five men and took the chair. I do not know whether she had seen that mark on the deck I have spoken of. She was of a death-like whiteness, but her eyes shone spiritedly as she ran them over the colored faces of the queer figures erect on either hand the table, and never at any time since the hour when the dawn showed me her pretty face aboard the "Anine," appareled as she then was as a boy, had I observed more composure and resolution in her countenance.

I stood close beside her, and Abraham and his mate were on her right. Nakier went on gliding feet to the fore-end of the

table and said something to the men. What language he expressed himself in I did not then, and still do not, know. The effect of his speech was to cause the whole of them to extend their arms toward us with the forefingers of both hands together. The posture, for the moment, was absolutely as though to Nakier's command they had simultaneously leveled firearms at us! Jacob fell back a step with a growl of alarm.

"What is all this, Nakier?" I called out.

"It is to say we are all your brodders, sah. It is my country sign of friendship."

Their hands fell to their sides, but immediately afterward Nakier spoke again to them, whereupon every man leveled his forefingers, as before, at Helga. Again Nakier spoke, and Punmeamootty left the cuddy.

"I wish he'd talk English," exclaimed Abraham, wiping his forehead. "Who's to know what's a-going to happen?"

"It is ailce right, Misser Wise," said Nakier, with a soft smile, half of reproach, half of encouragement. "Punmeamootty hab gone to fetch de Koran for we to swear to be true and not harm you."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A CONFERENCE.

THERE was now a pause. How am I to convey the dramatic character of this interval of silence? The hush of the night worked liked a spirit in the vessel, and the silence seemed to be deepened rather than disturbed by the dull, pinion-like beat of the mainsail swinging into the mast, by the occasional creak breaking forth from some slightly strained bulkhead, and by the half-muffled gurgling of some little lift of dark water laving the bark's side. I could witness no temper in the men. Wherever there lay a scowl, it was no more than a part of the creature's make. Their faces were by this time familiar to me, and I could not mistake. Custom had even diminished something of the fierceness, and I may say the hideousness, of the lemon-colored man, whose corrugated brow and savage eyes had been among the earliest details of this ship to attract my attention on boarding her. Yet with the memory in me of what had just now been enacted—with thoughts in me of two corpses scarcely yet cold sinking, still sinking, at but a little distance from the vessel—these men opposed a horribly formidable array of countenances to the gaze. Their various dyes of complexion were deepened by the lantern light; the grotesque character of

their attire seemed to intensify their tragic appearance. Their figures were as motionless as though they were acting the part as statues in a stage representation. At intervals one or another would look to right or left, but in the main their eyes were directed our way, and were chiefly fixed upon Helga.

Jacob stared as though in a dream; Abraham, with his underjaw hanging loose, appeared to be fascinated by Nakier. I longed to plunge into this silence, so to speak, to expend in speech and questions the emotions which were keeping my heart fiercely beating; but I was held dumb by the notion that this stillness was a part of the solemnities which were to be employed for the protection of our lives.

Punmeamootty re-entered the cuddy holding a book. Nakier took it from him, and turning round to us said:

"Look, lady! look, sah! You see dis is de Koran"—I observed that he sometimes said *de* and sometimes *the*—"it is our religion. We swear upon it. Look, to make sure!"

I received the volume and examined it. It was a manuscript bound in leather, with a flap, and very elegantly ornamented on the sides and back with some sort of devices in gold and color. The writing was in red, and every page was margined with a finely ruled red line. What tongue it was written in I could not, of course, tell. I have since supposed it was in Arabic; but for us it might as well have been the Talmud as the Koran. I returned the book to Nakier.

"It is allee right, you see, sah," he exclaimed, showing his wonderfully white teeth in a smile of gentle, respectful congratulation that put a deeper glow into his eyes and gave a new beauty to his handsome features.

"It may be the Koran," said I. "I can not tell. I will take your word."

He turned to the men, and, with a passionate gesticulation, addressed them; on which they shouted out all as one man: "Yaas! yaas! Al-Koran! Al-Koran!"—nodding and pointing and writhing and working with excess of Asiatic contortion.

"We are quite content," said I.

Nakier withdrew to his end of the table, carrying the book with him. He stood erect, blending the grace of a reposing dancer with an air of reserved eagerness and enthusiasm.

"Lady and you, sah!" he exclaimed, while every dusky eye along the table was fixed intently upon him, "you sabbee why we kill de capt'n and Misser Jones? Them two bad men—them two wicked, shocking men. They would make we poor Mussulmans sin, and would send we to hell. And why? Dey not care at heart our soul for to save. We came here for

work: we gib dem *dis* for dere money—" he elevated his clinched hands, and then gesticulated as though he pulled and hauled—"not dis, which is Allah's," striking his breast vehemently; by which, I presume, he signified his spirit or conscience.

A rumbling murmur ran round the table. I should not have supposed the fellows understood the man; but acquiescence was strong in every tawny face, and a universal nod followed when he struck his bosom.

"We not all Malay," he continued, "but we are all men, lady. We hab feeling—we hab hunger; we drink and cry and laugh like you all who are white and do not believe in de prophet. We have killed dose two shocking wicked men, and we are not sorry. No; it is justice!" he added, with a sudden piercing rise in his melodious voice, and a flash of the eye that was emphasized somewhat alarmingly by an unconscious clutch of his hand at the empty sheath strapped to his hip. But his manner instantly softened, and his voice sweetened again, though his behavior seemed, while it lasted, to exercise an almost electrical influence over his people. They fluttered and swayed to it like ears of wheat brushed by a wind, darting looks at one another and at us. But this ceased on Nakier resuming his former air.

"Dis ship," said he, "is boun' to Table Bay. Some of us belong to Cape Town. Allee want to get to Afric, and dem as not belong to Cape Town ship for dere own country. But dis ship must not steer for Cape Town. When we arrive, it is asked, 'Where is de capt'n? Where is Misser Jones?' and we must not tell," said he, smiling.

"But where do you wish to go to, then?" said I, almost oppressed by the sudden simultaneous turning of the men's dark, fiery eyes upon me.

"Near to Cape Town," said he.

"But what do you call near to Cape Town?" I asked.

"Oh, dere will be a river—we find him. We anchor and go ashore and walkee, walkee," he exclaimed.

Helga gave a little start.

"What you and your mates want is that we should put ye ashore somewhere?" said Abraham.

"Yaas, dat's so," called the fellow named Pallunappachelly.

"No, no!" cried Nakier, "not somewhere, Misser Vise. Near Cape Town, I say. Not too far for we to walkee."

"But to set ye ashore, anyhow?" exclaimed Abraham.

The man nodded.

"I suppose you know, Nakier," said I, with a sense of dismay pressing like a weight upon my spirits, "that this young lady and I wish to return home? The captain refused to part with us—he insisted on carrying us with him—we have a home to return to. Surely you do not intend that we should make the passage to the Cape in this bark?"

"Who will nabigate de ship?" said Nakier.

"Why, Mr. Wise will," I exclaimed, turning upon the boatman.

"Blowed, then, if I dew!" cried Abraham, recoiling. "What! along with these—arter what's—'soides, I don't know nothen about longitude."

"For mercy's sake, man, don't talk like that!" cried I. "Miss Nielsen and I must be transshiped."

"So must Oi!" said Abraham.

"And Oi!" hoarsely shouted Jacob.

"What ees it you say?" exclaimed Nakier, smiling.

"Why, that we all of us wish to get aboard another vessel, said I, "and leave this bark in your hands to do whatever you like with."

There was a sharp muttering of "No, no!" with some fierce shaking of heads on either side the table. Nakier made a commanding gesture and uttered a few words in his own tongue. "We must not speakee any ship, lady, and you, sah, and you, Misser Vise, and Jacob, my mate. Can not you tell why?"

"If you're going to keep us here for fear of our peaching," cried Abraham, "there's me for wan as is ready to take moy oath that I'll say nothen about what's happened, purwiding you safely set us aboard another wessel."

Nakier strained his ear, with a puzzled face. The language of Deal was happily unintelligible to him, for which I was exceedingly grateful, since nothing could be more imperiling than such talk as this. Helga, who all this while remained silent, seated in her chair, without lifting her eyes to my face or turning her head, said softly, in little more than a whisper, so that only I, who stood at her shoulder, could catch her accents, "You can see by their faces, Hugh, that they are resolved. All this has been preconcerted. Their plans are formed, and they mean to have their way. We must seem to consent. Let us agree, that they may take the oath, otherwise our lives are not worth more than the captain's or the mate's."

Nakier's glowing eyes were upon her, but, though the movements of her lips might have been visible, it would seem to

them as though she whispered to herself. The conviction that she was absolutely right in her advice came to me with her words. I needed but to glance at the double line of determined faces to gather that argument, that even hesitation would merely result in speedily enraging the fellows; that they were not to be influenced by the most reasonable of our wishes; that our lives had been spared in order that we should convey them to a place of safety; and this, too, I saw with the help of the illumination supplied by Helga's few words—that, fully believing the girl qualified to navigate the vessel, they might, if we provoked them, destroy the three of us and retain her, counting upon their threats and her situation to achieve their ends.

I said in a hurried aside to the boatmen: "Not a word, now, from either of you! This must be left to me! If you interfere, your blood will be on your own heads!" Then, addressing Nakier:

"Your demands are these: the bark is to be navigated to some part of the South African coast lying near to Table Bay?"

"Yaas, sah!" he answered, holding up one finger as though counting.

"The spot you wish to arrive at will have to be pointed out on the chart!"

Up went a second finger, followed by another. "Yaas, sah!"

"We are not to communicate with passing ships?"

"Right, sah!" he added, nodding and smiling, and raising a third finger.

"And then?" said I.

"Den," said he, "you swear to do dis and we swear by de Koran to be true, and to serve you, and be your friend."

"And if we refuse?" said I.

"Do not say it!" he cried, sweeping his hands forward as though to repel the idea.

"There must be other conditions!" said I, talking with an air of resolution which, I fear, was but poorly simulated. "First, as to the accommodation?"

"I do not understand!" said Nakier.

"I mean where are we to live?" I cried.

"Oh, here! oh, here!" he shouted, motioning round the cuddy; "dis is your room. No man of us come here."

"And here I stop, tew," said Abraham. "No more of your forecastle for me, mates!"

"Nor for me!" rumbled Jacob.

"Do not say so!" exclaimed Helga, turning hastily to address them. "Be advised. Do not interfere. Let Mr. Tregarthen have his way."

"And I suppose," I continued, running my eyes over the rows of faces till they settled on Nakier, "that we shall be waited upon as usual, and that we shall be as well cared for as when Captain Bunting was alive?"

"Yaas, sah! yaas, sah!" said Nakier demonstratively, and Punmeamootty shouted: "Me wait allee same upon you and de sweet lady. Me sabbee what you like. Me get dem room ready," pointing to the mate's and the captain's cabins.

I shook my head with a shudder, then said softly to Helga, whose gaze was bent on the table: "Can you suggest anything further for me to say to them?"

"Nothing. Get them to take their oath, Hugh."

"Nakier!" I exclaimed, "we consent to your proposals. Among us we will navigate this ship for you. But first you and your mates will swear by that Koran in which you believe —I suppose it is the Koran—"

"Oh, yaas, yaas!" he cried, and there was a general chorus of "yaases."

"You must swear by that sacred book of yours not to harm us; to be our friends; to serve us and do our bidding as though we were officers of this ship. Explain this to your men, and let them take the oath in theirs and your country's fashion, and we shall be satisfied."

On this he addressed them. I hear now his melodious voice and witness his animated, handsome face as he poured forth his rich, unintelligible syllables. It was difficult to look at the fellow and not believe that he was some prince of his own nation. There was nothing in his scarecrow clothes to impair the dignity of his mien and the grace of his motions. I could conceive of him as a species of man-serpent capable of fascinating and paralyzing with his marvelous eyes, holding his victim motionless till he should choose to strike. His influence over the others was manifestly supreme, and I had no doubt whatever that the tragedy which had been enacted was his and wholly his by the claim of creation and command. While he talked I would here and there mark a dingy face with a look of expostulation in it. The lamp swinging fairly over the table yielded light enough to reveal expressions. When he had ceased there was a little hubbub of voices, a running growl, so to speak, of discontent. One cried out to him, and then another, and then a third, but in notes of expostulation rather than temper.

Helga, without turning her head, said to me, "I expect they wish us to swear too. Your bare assurance does not satisfy them."

The guess seemed a shrewd one, and highly probable, but the men's talk was sheer Hebrew to the four of us. Nakier listened, darting looks from side to side, then suddenly lifted both his hands in the most dramatic posture of denunciation that could be imagined, and hissed some word to them, whereupon every man fell as silent as though he had been shot. He picked up the volume and extended it to the fellow next him.

"Takee, takee," he cried, speaking that we might understand. "Lady, and you, sah, Misser Vise and Jacob my mate, dis is de Mussulman oath we men now take. I speak not well your language, but dis is my speech in English of what you shall hear." Then, composing his countenance and turning up his eyes till nothing gleamed but the whites of them in his dark visage, he exclaimed in a profoundly devotional tone and in accents as melodious as singing:

"In de name of Allah de most merciful, and de good Lord of all things, if break dis oath do I, den, oh, Allah, may I go to hell!"

He paused, then turned to the man who held the volume, who forthwith held the book at arm's-length above his head and pronounced in his native tongue what we might suppose the oath that Nakier had essayed to make English of. This done, the book was handed to the next man, and so it went round, all in dead silence, broken only by the strange, wildly solemn accents of the oath-taker, and I noticed that the glittering eyes of Nakier rested upon every man as he swore, as though he constrained him to take the vow by his gaze.

Abraham and his mate looked on with open mouths, breathing deeply. The book came to Nakier. He was about to lift it, paused, and spoke to the fierce-looking fellow that was called Ong Kew Ho, who immediately glided out of the cabin —none of these men seemed to walk: the motion of their legs resembled that of skaters. I was wondering what was to happen next, when the fellow who had been stationed at the wheel arrived. Nakier addressed him. Immediately he extended his arms and leveled his forefingers at us as the others had; then elevated the book and recited the oath.

"All this looks very honest," I whispered to Helga.

Then Nakier took the oath, handed the volume to a man, and said something. Instantly every man's arms were pointed at

us, with the index finger touching, and a minute later all the men, saving Nakier, had quitted the cabin.

"You see, lady, it is allee right," said he, smiling.

"Yes, we are satisfied," she exclaimed, rising from her chair; but her eyes caught the stain on the deck; an expression of horror worked in her face like a spasm, and she brought her hand to her breast with a half-stifled exclamation.

"When day come," said Nakier, addressing Helga, "we look at de chart and find out de place for you to steer we to."

His bearing was still full of Eastern grace and courtesy. No expression entered his face to deform its beauty; yet somehow I seemed sensible of a subtle spirit or quality of command in the fellow, as though he was now disguising his sense of power and possession with difficulty. It was clear that he looked to Helga mainly, if not wholly, for what was to be done for them.

"You shall point out the spot you have in your mind," said she.

"You sabbee nabigation, sweet lady?"

"Among us," she answered, with a motion of her hand that comprehended the two boatmen and myself, "we shall be able to do all you require."

He made a sort of salaam to her, and said, looking at Abraham, "Who keep de watch?"

"Whose watch on deck is it?" I asked.

"The starboard's—moine," answered Abraham, with an uneasy shuffling of his feet.

"Allee right, Mr. Vise; allee right! It is veree fine night. I go now to sleep," said Nakier, and he went in his sliding, spirit-like fashion to the cuddy door, and vanished in the blackness on the quarter-deck.

The four of us stood grouped at the head of that little table, staring at one another. Now that the colored crew were gone, a sense of the unreality of what had happened possessed me. It was like starting from a nightmare, with the reason in one slowly dominating the horror raised by the hideous phantasmagoria of sleep.

"We must not seem to be standing here as though we were planning and plotting," exclaimed Helga. "Dark figures out in that shadow there are watching us."

"That's right enough, miss," said Abraham; "but what's to be done?"

"Here stands a man," cried Jacob, hotly, striking his breast, "as dorn't mean for to be carried to the Cape in a bloomin' wessel full o' bloody savages; and that's speaking straight."

"Hush!" cried I. "Soften those leather lungs of yours, will you?"

"Ain't there no firearms knocking about?" said Abraham.

"I hope not," said Helga; "we shall be able to manage without firearms."

I looked at her white face but resolute mouth and steady, spirited blue gaze.

"What is in your mind, Helga?"

"An idea not yet formed," she answered. "Give me time to think. I believe that not only are our lives to be saved but the vessel too!"

"Ha!" cried Abraham, with a thirsty look. "It needs a sailor's lass to get such a fancy as that into her head! I'm a cockney if I don't seem to see a salwage job here!"

But Jacob was staring at us gloomily.

"What I says is this," he exclaimed, addressing us with his fists clinched: "Here be three Englishmen and a gal with the heart of two men in her"—"Softly!" I interposed—"with the heart of two men in her," he continued, with a shake of his fist; "and what's forward? He-leven whisps of colored yarn! He'leven heffigies, with backbones separately to be broke like this!" He crooked his knee, and made as if he were breaking a stick across it. "Are we," he cried, with the blood mounting to his face and an expression of wrath sparkling in his eyes—"are we fower—three men and a young lady—to quietly sit down and wait to be murdered, or are we to handle 'em as if they was a pack of apes, to be swept below and smothered under hatches as a breeze o' wind 'ud blow a coil of smoke along?"

"Lower you voice, man!" I whispered. "What do you want—to court the death that you bolted aloft to escape?"

"What's to prevent us," he continued, muffling his tone, though the fierceness of his temper hissed in every breath he expelled—"what's to prevent us a-doing this? More'n than the watch are below; three or fower may be on deck. Ain't the scuttle forrads to be clapped down over the forecastle, where they lie safe as if they was at the bottom of a well a hundred foot deep? Ain't that to be done? And if the three or fower that's knocking about on deck aren't to be handled by us three men—good-noight!"

He rounded his back upon us in sheer contempt of passion.

"We may do better than that," said Helga.

"You're for supposing that they ain't going to keep a bright lookout, mate," said Abraham. "See here! What's good to be done, these here hands you'll find equal to," smiting

first his left then his right knuckles; "but s'elp me Moses I'm not here to be killed. Them chaps are born knife-stickers. Touch one, and you're groaning at your length on deck with a mortal wound in your witals. And if what we do ain't complete—if so be as they're wan too many for us—and it's eleven to three, remember that, mate—what's to happen? Ask yourself the question! For the lady's sake, I'm for all caution."

"We must not remain debating here," said I. "They believe us sincere. There are eyes watching us, as Miss Nielsen says. This holding a counsel is not going to reassure them. If you object to keeping a lookout, Abraham, I'll take charge."

"I will keep you company, Hugh," said Helga.

"No, no!" cried Abraham. "It's moy watch, and Oi'll keep it."

He went clumsily, and with a bewildered manner, to the companion steps.

"I'll remain along wi' ye, Abey," said Jacob. "Arter what I saw as I stood at the wheel—the poor chap's cry—the way they chucked him overboard—" He buried his eyes in his coat-sleeve. "The cussed murderers!" he exclaimed, lifting his face, and looking savagely around.

"Come!" cried Abraham, "if ye mean to come! What's your temper a-going to do for us?"

"I'll relieve you at four o'clock," said I, looking at the time-piece, the hands of which stood at a quarter before two.

The men went on deck, and, turning down the lamp—for the revelation of the light served as a violent irritant to the nerves on top of the fancy of the secret, fiery eyed observation of us without—I seated myself beside Helga on a locker to whisper and to think.

The girl and I had passed though some evil, dark, and dangerous hours since we first came together in that furious Saturday night's gale; but never was the worst of them all comparable to this middle watch through which we sat, for hard upon two hours of it, in gloom, in the ocean silence that lay upon the bark, imagining the movement of dark shapes in the blackness that came like a wall to the cabin door, and the gleam of swiftly recoiling eyes peering at us through the cabin skylight. Regularly through the stillness sounded the combined tread of Abraham and his mate over our heads, with sometimes a halt that almost startled the ear, while we could clearly catch the rumbling growling of their conversation as they passed the skylight on their way to and fro.

Yet, strangely enough—I am speaking for myself—the horror

of the double assassination did not lie upon my spirit with the deadening weight I should have imagined as the effect of so shocking, sudden, and bloody a tragedy. That which might have been acute horror was subdued into little more than a dull and sickening consternation by perception of our own peril. Yet I would look at those berths lying on either side the cuddy front as though from either one or the other of them the figure of the captain or his mate must stalk! The stain upon the cabin deck lay black as ink against the captain's door. Oh! to think that that was all of him his bark now contained!

We sat whispering about the unhappy creature and his wretched subordinate; then our talk went to other matters. I told Helga we need not question that the intention of the crew was to cast the vessel away upon some part of the South African coast, near enough to Cape Town to enable them to trudge the distance, but too remote from civilization for the movements of the bark to be witnessed. That was their resolution, I said: I would swear to it as though it had been revealed to me. That they would never suffer us three men to land alive we might be as sure as that they had slaughtered Bunting and his mate.

"Their oath counts for nothing, you think?" said she.

I answered nothing; they would value their lives above their oath. Not likely they would suffer us to testify to their crime. Under the serpent-fair exterior of Nakier lay as passionless a capacity of murder as ever formed the mechanical instinct of any deadly beast or reptile.

"His eye," I said, "will never be off us." Even as we whispered, his gaze or that of another subtle as himself might be upon us. He was the one to fear, and this carried me into asking, "What is to be done?"

Yet before the hands of the clock were upon the hour of four we knew what was to be done. It was wholly Helga's scheme. Her little brain had planned it all, but it was not until she spoke and delivered her plot bit by bit that I understood the reason of her silence while I had been feverishly whispering my fears, talking of the captain, of Nakier, of the treachery of the Malay and Cingalese miscreants, and asking, as one might think aloud, "What is to be done?"

We went on deck at four; it was the darkest hour of the night, but very quiet. I bade Abraham and the other man go forward and turn in as had heretofore been their custom.

"Not a word!" I cried, in swift response to the first of Jacob's remonstrances. "I can not speak here. There are

thirsty ears at the wheel. We have planned that long before this time to-morrow the bark shall be our own, with nothing more for you to do than to calculate the value of the salvage. I'll find an early chance to explain—but not here! not now! Forward with you both, for our lives depend upon the fellows believing that we have confidence in them."

This I spoke as rapidly as intelligibility would permit, and, with Helga, drew away from them, moving toward the wheel. They hung as though staring and deliberating a few moments, then, without a word, went forward.

I spoke pleasantly to the fellow at the helm—what man it was I could not see—said that the vessel's course was the right navigation for the South African coast, and so forth. He answered me throatily, with a note of satisfaction in his thick speech, and then Helga and I fell to quietly pacing the deck.

We took great care to speak low; so nimble and ghostly were the movements of this colored crew that it was impossible to tell where a man might be lying listening and hidden. Twice I beheld the flitting of a shadow in the obscurity round about the main-mast, and all the while I walked I was again and again casting a look behind me.

It seemed an eternity ere the cold gray of the dawn hovered in the east. The first sight the bleak and desolate light revealed was a patch of dark crimson abreast of the companion, close against the rail, marking the spot where the unhappy mate had been stabbed. The bark stole glimmering out to the daylight, lifting her ashen canvas with a gloom about the deck where the forecastle ended as though the blackness of the night had been something tangible, and the lingering shadows betwixt the rails fragments and tatters of it. I swept the sea-line. The ocean was a gray desert floating in thin lines of swell which made it resemble a vast carpet stirred by a draught of wind. But the small breeze of the previous evening was still with us, and the broad bows of the vessel broke the water into wrinkles fine-drawn as piano-wire as she swam forward, slowly rolling.

Three of the crew sat, squatting like Lascars, against the long-boat. I called, and they instantly sprung to their feet and came aft.

"Get scrapers," said I, "and work that stain out of the deck as fast as you can move your arms."

They sprung forward, returned with the necessary tools, and, in a minute, were on their knees scraping violently. With a dreadful feeling of sickness of heart I rejoined Helga at the other end of the deck.

The sun rose; the morning was to be a bright one; the heavens went, in a clear tropic blue, into the south and west, and in the north-east the clouds, like a scattering of frosted silver, hung high and motionless—mere pearly feathers of vapor, to be presently absorbed. Helga went below to her cabin under the deck. When I asked her if she did not feel timid at the idea of penetrating those gloomy depths alone, she smiled, and, merely saying, "Ay, Hugh! you have called me a brave girl, but you do not believe me to be so," she left me.

It was shortly after seven o'clock that I spied Nakier standing in the galley door talking to some one within. I called to him: he immediately knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and, slipping the inch of sooty clay into his breast, approached me. His salute was full of respect, and he surveyed me with eyes so gentle and so cordial that one looked to see the engaging tenderness of his heart overflowing his face in smiles. So much for appearances! The most poisonous-fanged rogue of them all in that bark full of colored wretches made miscreants and murderers of by Captain Joppa Bunting's theories of conversion might have passed to every eye as one of the very few sweet-souled men in this great world of wrong-headed humanity!

"I want you to send Abraham to me, Nakier," said I, in the civilest manner I could command. "It is his watch below, but I desire his presence and help while I overhaul the captain's cabin for charts, for instruments of navigation and so forth."

He sought to veil, by drooping his lids, the keen glance he shot at me.

"Yaas, I send Misser Vise to you, sah," said he; "but first I would like to speakee about dat place we sail to. We have agree, and we ask you," he continued, with a smile that put an expression of coaxing into his handsome face, "to agree allee same with us to sail for Mossel Bay. It is a very good bay, and it have a nice little town."

"Yes," said I; "and when we get there, what do you mean to do with the ship?"

"Oh, we allee go ashore," he answered.

He then asked me if I knew where Mossel Bay was situated. I answered that I had never heard of the place, but that if it was down on the charts we should undoubtedly be able to carry the bark to it. I then again requested him to send Abraham aft that he and I and the young lady might examine the contents of the captain's cabin, ascertain the situation of the ship when observations were last taken, and confer as to the course

to be steered. I thought he hesitated for an instant, but, with true Malay swiftness of resolution that scarcely gave me time to note the hang of the mind in him, he exclaimed: "I will send Misser Vise, sah," and went forward.

In a few minutes Abraham arrived. He was speedily followed by Jacob, who hung about in the waist, looking wistfully aft. He, however, was to be talked to afterward, for the policy of the three of us was to keep as separate as possible, coming together only under some such excuse as I had now invented. The men who formed the watch on deck were "loafing about," to use the expressive vulgarism, one lounging against the bulwark rail with another talking to him; here a fellow squatting like a Hindoo blowing a cloud, there a couple patroling ten feet of deck, their arms folded upon their breasts. There was no gesticulation, no excitement, nothing of the swift, fierce whispered conversation significant with the flashing of the askant glance that had been noticeable down to the dusk of the previous evening. Nakier paced the weather-side of the forecastle. I never once caught him looking our way, yet I could feel that the fellow had us in his eye as fully as though his stare was a level one.

"Abraham," said I, "I have sent for you under the pretense of helping me to overhaul the dead skipper's stock of nautical appliances. My real motive is to create an opportunity to acquaint you with the plot Miss Nielsen and I settled between us while we were in the cuddy. Don't look knowing, man! Put on as honest and stupid a Deal beach air as you can manufacture."

I called to Nakier.

"The bark will want watching. Step aft and keep a lookout while we are below, will you?" And followed by Abraham I entered the cuddy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HELGA'S PLOT.

Before summoning Helga I resolved to take a peep at the berths, lest there should be some sight in one or the other of them too shocking for her to behold. I was made to think of this by the great blood stain on the deck close against the cabin door. Its true complexion showed in the daylight. Abraham again backed away on seeing it; but time was precious. This was an opportunity to be made the most of, and, pushing open the door, I peered in. It was as I might have conjectured. The captain had been assassinated by twenty strokes of the

fellows' knives as he lay in his bunk asleep. Not one, not half a dozen stabs could have made such a horror of the bedclothes and the square of carpet on the deck as we gazed at. It was not an interior fit for Helga to enter.

I looked into the mate's berth, and found it as the man had left it—the blanket lying as it had been tossed when he arose. There was nothing frightful here; but our business lay in the captain's cabin, and, full of loathing, I re-entered the horrible room and shut the door.

"A piteous sight! a piteous sight, sir!" exclaimed Abraham, looking about him in a stupefied way, and biting upon his underlip to moisten it.

"Now, attend!" said I. "Collect your wits, for our stratagem signifies life or death to us."

It took me but a few minutes to communicate Helga's plan. He grasped the thing with sailorly promptitude, nodding eagerly, with the blood returning to his cheeks to my hurried whispering, and when I had made an end and drew back to mark his judgment in his face, he struck his thigh a mighty blow, but said in a voice cold with resolution, despite his countenance being all a-work with agitation:

"It will do, sir. It can't fail. It is only the getting 'em together; but it is to be done with a little patience."

"Now," said I, "let us see what is here. Will the poor fellow have had a revolver?"

But we searched in vain for such a weapon. With hasty, desperate hands, never knowing but that at the next moment Nakier might enter or some probing yellow face stare in upon us through the little window that overlooked the quarter-deck, we ransacked the lockers, explored a large black sea-chest, examined the shelves—to no purpose.

"He was too good a Christian man," said Abraham, hoarsely, "to own a pistol. Had he been a Nova Scotia man, there'd be veapons enough here to rig out a regiment of the line vith."

"It can not be helped," said I, keenly disappointed, nevertheless, for I had counted upon finding a revolver, scarcely doubting that a man in charge of such a ship's company as these colored fellows formed would go to sea well armed.

With all haste possible we transfixed to the mate's cabin a bag of charts, a couple of sextants, a chronometer, and other matters of a like sort, and then, with sickened hearts, closed the door upon that tragic interior of the captain's berth. I looked through the contents of the bag, and found a large, blue-backed chart of South Africa, with marginal illustrations of the principal ports, harbors, and headlands.

"This will do," said I, and rolling it up I put it under my arm, and, accompanied by Abraham, stepped through the cuddy door.

My eye once more as I passed fell upon the dreadful stain ingrained in the plank of the deck, and, observing Punmeamootty speaking with another man a little forward of the mainmast, I was about to call and order him to scrape out the odious shocking blotch. But at the same instant it crossed my mind to let it be: it was a detail to fit into our stratagem, and I whispered the fancy to Abraham as we quitted the cuddy. I believed that all this while Helga was below in her cabin, and I was leaning over the little hatch that led to our quarters to call to her, when she pronounced my name from the deck overhead, and on looking up I saw her standing at the brass rail with Nakier.

"Shall Oi go forward an' get my breakfast or keep along with you, Mr. Tregarthen?" said Abraham.

"Keep with me for a little time," I answered, and he followed me on to the poop.

Nakier's fine eyes glowed and his face was lighted up with an expression of admiration and pleasure. It was manifest at the first glance that Helga had not spared her simple, pretty arts in conversing with him. Her first words to me were:

"Nakier has been talking to me about his native country, Hugh. Oh! what a shining land of flowers and birds and a thousand other delights it must be!" She clasped her hands as though in rapture, and added: "I shall hope some of these days to visit that beautiful country."

"This is all very clever, and happily devised, and well done," thought I, stealing a peep at Nakier, who was steadfastly regarding with undissembled admiration the girl's sweet, fresh face, that was faintly flushed by her enactment; "but if we three men should be made away with"—I choked off the hurry of ugly fancies that swarmed on top of the thought of that dark, princely mannered villain falling in love with her, and exclaimed:

"Yes, the country of the Malays is a paradise, I believe! Here, Nakier, is a chart of South Africa."

We went to the skylight to spread it.

"Now," said I, "where is this Mossel Bay that you were speaking about?"

I pored upon the chart in a posture of eager interest. He immediately pointed to the place with a forefinger as delicately shaped as a woman's.

"Ha!" said I. "Yes; that is to the eastward of Agulhas.

"See," I continued, pointing to one of those marginal illustrations I have referred to, "here is a picture of the bay. It is a long walk to Cape Town!" I continued, looking round with a smile at Nakier.

"Oh, no; plenty coach, plenty horse, plenty ox," he responded, showing his teeth and speaking without the least hesitation—a quality of assurance that made me hopeful, for it was everything indeed that he should believe us credulous enough to suppose that Mossel Bay was the destination he had in his mind.

"Here is the picture, Helga!" said I. "D'ye see it, Abraham? A fine open roadstead, not to be easily missed by you and Miss Nielsen. There are a couple of excellent sextants and a good chronometer below, and all necessary instruments for a safe navigation."

"Oy, a first-class bay, and no mistake," exclaimed Abraham.

Bending his squint upon the chart in a musing way, he scored along the line of coast with his square-cut thumb, as though calculating courses and distances. Miserable as I felt, I could have burst into a laugh at the face he put on.

"Oi've long had a notion," said he, still squinting at the chart, "of wisiting these 'ere foreign parts. Oi've heerd tell of Cape Town as a proper city, plenty o' grapes a-knocking about and sherry vines and the likes of them drinks to be had for the asting, everything A 1 and up to the knocker. But see here, Nakier," said he, in a wonderfully familiar and friendly, shipmate-like sort of way. "Oi'm a pore man, and so is my mate Jacob. Tell ye what Oi'm a-thinking of: ain't there no chance of our taking up a few pound for this here run?"

His apparent earnestness must have deceived a subtler eye than ever Nakier could have brought to bear on him. I uttered a word or two, as though I would remonstrate.

"You and me, Misser Vise, will speak on dat by um by. We allee want money, and we get it," responded Nakier, nodding significantly.

I partly turned away, as though there was nothing in this conversation to interest me.

"Ye don't know what hoveling is, Nakier, Oi suppose?" said Abraham. "This here wessel is what we should call a blooming good job down our way—"

I interrupted him, fearful lest he should overdo his part:

"You might go forward and get some breakfast now, Abraham. You can relieve me here when you have finished the

meal. Is there anything more you wish to know that this chart can tell us about, Nakier?"

"No, sah. Now you sabbee where Mossel Bay is, it is allee right."

Abraham was descending the poop-ladder. Under pretense of giving him the chart to replace in the mate's berth, I whispered, "Mind you tell Jacob everything," and then walked aft with Helga, leaving Nakier to go forward.

Throughout that morning the weather continued wonderfully brilliant and quiet. The heavens were a sweep of blue from line to line, and the sun as hot as we might have thought to find it ten degrees further south. But shortly after ten o'clock the weak wind, that had been barely giving the "Light of the World" steerage way, entirely failed; the atmosphere grew stagnant with the dry, parched hollowness that one sometimes notices before a storm, as though nature sucked in her cheeks before expelling her breath through her feverish lips. I put my head into the skylight to look at the barometer, not knowing but that there might be dirty weather at the heels of this passing spell of sultry silence; but the mercury stood high, and the lens-like sharpness of the line of the horizon along with the high fine-weather blue was as ample a confirmation of its promise as one could hope to find. By eleven o'clock the calm was broken by a delicate rippling of wind out of the north-east—the first fanning of the north-east trade-wind I took it to be. The yards were trimmed to the change by Abraham, who followed on with some orders about the foretopmast-studding-sail. I was on deck at the time, and, hearing this, rose hastily and thrust past him, saying betwixt my teeth, so vexed was I by his want of foresight:

"Keep all fast with your studding-sail gear, you fool! Are we three Englishmen taking a line-of-battle ship's company? Pray think before you bawl out!"

He saw his blunder, and, after a leisurely, well-acted view of the sea, as though the weather had raised a debate in his mind, he called out to the three or four fellows who were clambering aloft to rig the boom out on the foreyard:

"Never mind about that there stun'-sail! Ye can lay down, moy lads!" and he bawled to me (who had returned aft), by way, no doubt, of excusing himself to Nakier, who was on the forecastle and who appeared to be keeping a keen lookout upon the ship on his own account, "There's no use, Oi think, Mr. Tregarthen, a-worriting about stun'-sails until this here breeze hardens. It'll only be keeping the men a-going for no good."

"Unless we are speedy," I whispered to Helga, as we stood

within ear-shot of the helmsman, "that man Abraham will ruin us. Think of the fellow piling canvas at such a time! What a curse is consequentiality when out of season! Here is a poor, miserable Deal boatman with the privilege of ordering a few black men about, and he doesn't know how to make enough of his rights."

From time to time I would gaze mechanically round the sea in search of a ship, but with no notion of finding encouragement in the gleam of a sail or in the shadowing of a steamer's smoke. My hope lay in a very different direction. But custom is strangely strong on shipboard, and I continued to look, though I was without the wish to see.

Shortly before noon I fetched the two sextants, one of which I gave to Abraham and the other to Helga. The boatman seemed hardly to know what to do with the instrument; it was a new, very handsome sextant, sparkling with brass and details of telescope, glass, and the like, and bore as little resemblance to the aged, time-eaten quadrant that had gone down with the "Early Morn" as to the cross-staff of the Ancient Mariner. I marked him putting it to his eye, and then fumbling with it, and, noticing several fellows forward, Nakier among them, attentively watching us, I called to him softly:

"Keep it at your eye, man! Let them believe that you thoroughly understand it!"

"Roight ye are," he answered, putting the instrument to his face; "but who the blazes is a-going to bring the sun into the middle o' such a muddle o' hornamentation as this here?"

The attention of the men, however, was in reality fixed upon Helga. She stood at the rail within full view of them, and there was, indeed, novelty enough in the sight to account for their staring, apart from the hope they had of her as the one that was to navigate their ship to the coast on which, as I took it, they meant to wreck her. Her well-fitting dress of dark serge showed no signs of wear as yet. No posture that she might have artfully adopted could so happily express the charms of her figure as this, when she turned her face sunward, with the shining sextant raised to her eye. The delicate pale gold of her short hair was the right sort of tint to fascinate the dusky gaze that was fastened upon her. In her conversations with me she had made little or nothing of her knowledge of navigation, but it was easy to see in an instant's glance that she was a practiced hand in the art of coaxing the sun's limb to the sip of the sea-line.

I spied Nakier forward watching her with an air of breathless interest. He and the rest of them might have doubted her

capacity, knowing of it only from such off-hand talk as Punmeamootty had been able to collect and repeat from the cabin table. But now she was justifying their expectations, and by this time the whole of the crew—ten of them, with Jacob in the waist and a Malay at the wheel—were staring as one man; the cook from the door of his galley, Nakier on the forecastle swinging off from a rope, the rest of them in groups here and there.

"It is eight bells," cried Helga, in her clear voice, accentuated, as it always was, with a faint harshness of Scandinavian articulation.

"Height bells!" roared Abraham, though it might have been midnight to him, so far as the indications of his sextant went.

"Eight bell!" piped the melodious voice of Nakier, like a belated echo of Helga's cry; and the chimes floated along the quiet decks.

I told Abraham to go below to the mate's cabin, and bring materials of ink, paper, log-book, and so forth, to enable Helga to work out the sights; also the chronometer and the "Nautical Almanac." This was a part of our plot; otherwise, as you may suppose, the chronometer was not a thing to be carried here and there, least of all by such hands as Abraham's. The men were now passing in and out of the galley, conveying their dinner of smoking beef and ship's "duff" into the forecastle. They talked eagerly, and with a gratulatory tone. That Helga had been able to find out what o'clock it was by the sextant was the fullest warranty of her sufficience as a navigator the poor wretches' ignorant souls could have demanded.

Nakier remained on the forecastle watching us. I summoned him with a motion of my forefinger, and he came rapidly gliding to the poop.

"I wish you to remain here," said I, "while Miss Nielsen calculates the bark's position, that you may be able to tell the rest of the men they are in friendly hands, and that we look for the same friendly behavior from you all."

He answered with a motion of his hand that was as expressive as a Frenchman's gesture.

"It would have been more convenient for the lady," I continued, "to have made her calculations in the captain's cabin, but"—I looked him full in the face. He did not seem to understand. "That berth is not fit for her to enter."

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "dat shall be put right. I have forgot."

"By and by. No hurry now. Tell Punmeamootty to bring us our dinner here. Miss Nielsen does not care to use the cuddy. She is a young lady—impressionable—you understand me, Nakier? When all is made straight the feeling will pass with her. But for the present—"

I broke off as Abraham arrived bringing with him the articles I had dispatched him to procure.

"Whose trick at the wheel is it?" I asked the boatman, carelessly. "It is noon, and that man yonder has been at the helm since ten."

"It'll be Jacob's, sir. Oi allow he's waiting to finish his dinner."

"No, no," said I, "that's not true ship's discipline. Fair must be fair aboard us," and, with some demonstration of warmth in my manner, I went to the poop rail and bawled for Jacob to come aft.

The man promptly made his appearance, and the moment he had gripped the spokes of the wheel the ginger-colored fellow who had been steering fled along the decks for his dinner fleet as a hare with hunger. Abraham, with pencil and paper in hand, leaned upon the companion-cover while he pretended to be lost in calculating. Nakier and I stood looking on at Helga, who was seated on one side the skylight, the lid of which being closed and lying flat, provided her with a table on which stood the chronometer, the volumes, the charts, and the other appliances she needed. She knew exactly what to do, and worked out her problems with a busy face and the blue of her eyes sweetened into violet by the shadow of the lashes. Deeply worried, miserably anxious as I was on the eve of a project the failure of which was bound to signify an inhuman butchery of the three of us by the dark-skinned creatures we designed to betray, I could still find heart for admiration of the wonderful heroism of this girl. She was actively to share in our enterprise, and, if failure followed, her doom might be even more fearful than ours; yet, had her face been of marble carved into an incomparable counterfeit of a girl's countenance intent on a bit of arithmetic and nothing more, its passionlessness, its marvelous freedom from all expression of agitation, could not have been completer.

When she had completed her reckoning, she opened the chart which bore Captain Bunting's "prickings," as they are termed, and with rules and pencil continued the line to the situation of the ship at noon.

"That is where we are at this moment," she exclaimed, pointing to the chart.

Nakier, with looks of astonishment and delight, peered.

"What d'ye make it, miss?" called Abraham.

She gave him the latitude and longitude—what it was has wholly escaped me.

"Roight," he shouted, tearing up his bit of paper.

"Take these things below, Abraham," said I, indicating the nautical instruments and charts, "and then get your dinner. When you have done I shall want you to come aft and take charge of the bark for half an hour. Miss Nielsen wishes to go to her cabin, and I am no sailor to be left alone with this craft."

"Oy, oy, sir!" he answered, and picking up the things he trundled off the poop.

"Send Punmeamootty here with something for us to eat, if you please, Nakier," said I.

He made a soft salaaming bow, and quitted us with shining eyes and a highly pleased face. Presently the steward approached us with some cold salt beef, biscuit, and a bottle of wine. He spread a cloth upon the skylight, and then brought a couple of chairs from the cabin. While he was doing this I slipped into the mate's berth and took a track-chart of the world from the bag and returned with it. I opened and pretended to examine it with anxious attention, speaking in an aside to Helga in a grumbling, doubting voice, and with a shake of my head, while Punmeamootty stood by waiting to learn if we had further orders. I told him we should require nothing more, and then rolling up the chart, feigned to attack the repast before us. But as to eating!—not for ten times the value of this "Light of the World" and her cargo could I have swallowed a morsel. Helga munched a biscuit and drank a little wine, eying me collectedly, with often a smile when my glance went to her.

"What a heart beats in you!" I cried, gently, for it was impossible to know but that some wriggling, nimble-heeled colored skin had slipped into the cabin, and was hanging motionless close under us, with his ear at the skylight. "But it is not too late even yet to reconsider. I can do without you, Helga."

"Yes, but not so well as with me," she answered.

"But if we fail—"

"There must be no thought of failing."

"If we fail," I continued, "they may spare you as not apparently in the plot, and they will spare you the more readily, and use you well too, since they must be helpless without you to navigate them."

"Hush!" she whispered. "The stratagem will be the surer for my presence. And what is the danger? There can be none if we manage as we have arranged."

"When d'ye reckon on starting on this here job, Mr. Tregarthen?" called Jacob from the wheel.

I shook my fist as a hint to him to hold his tongue. I waited a few minutes, during which I pretended to be busy with my knife and fork. The yellow-faced cook stood in the galley door smoking; there were two fellows beyond him conversing close against the forecastle hatch. The rest of the seamen were below at their dinner. I now opened the chart; Helga came round to my side, and the pair of us fell to pointing and motioning with our hands over the chart as though we were warmly discussing a difficulty. I raised my voice and shook my head, exclaiming: "No, no! Any sailor will tell you that the prevailing gales off Agulhas are from the east'ard;" and continued in this fashion, delivering meaningless sentences, always very noisily, and with a great deal of gesticulation, while Helga acted a like part. The three fellows forward watched us steadfastly.

Just then Abraham rose out of the forecastle hatch and approached the poop in a strolling, rolling gait, carelessly filling his pipe as he came and sending the true 'longshore leisurely look at the sea from side to side. A couple of fellows followed him out of the hatch, entered the galley for a light, as I supposed, and emerged smoking. Helga and I still feigned to be wrangling. Then Abraham joined us, and, after listening a minute or two, raised his voice with a wrangling note in it also.

"Come, Helga," I whispered, "this fooling has lasted long enough. Now for it, and may God shield us! Abraham, stand by, my lad! Keep your eye forward!"

I had courted a few occasions of peril in my time, and knew what it was to have death close alongside of me for hour after hour; but then my blood was up, there was human life to be saved, and, outside that consideration, there was small opportunity for thought. It was otherwise now, and I own that my heart felt cold as stone as I advanced to the forecastle with Helga. I prayed that my cheeks would not betray my inward perturbation. I did not greatly fear for the girl. Though we should fail, I believed her life would be saved, horrible as the conditions of preservation might prove to her. It was otherwise with me. Let but a suspicion of my intention enter the minds of the men, and I knew that in the space of a pulse or two I must be a corpse, pierced by every knife in that vessel's forecastle.

As I approached the hatch that led to the quarters of the crew, Nakier came out of it. I suppose that the fellows who had been watching us called down to him, and that he came up to gather what the discussion on the poop might be about. He looked astonished by our presence in that fore part of the ship, and there was a mingling of puzzlement and of cunning in his eyes as he ran them over us.

"Nakier," said I, "I can not satisfy myself that Mossel Bay is a safe and easy destination for this vessel."

"It was settle, sah," he exclaimed, quickly.

"There are more accessible ports on the South African coast. What are the views of your crew?"

"Dey are all of my 'pinion, sah."

"The matter has not been discussed in their presence," I exclaimed. "Why do you wish to carry us round Agulhas? Besides, do not you know that there are ships of war at Simon's Bay, and that there is every chance of our falling in with one of her majesty's cruisers off that line of coast you wish us to sail round?"

By this time the few men on deck had gathered about us, and were listening eagerly with their necks craned and their eyes, like blots of ink upon ovals of yellow satin, but fire-touched, steadfast upon me.

"I do not agree with Mr. Tregarthen, Nakier," said Helga. "I believe there is nothing to fear from our sailing round the Cape. He speaks of the heavy seas of the Southern Ocean and of strong easterly winds. It is not so," she added, smiling.

"No, no," he cried, with a passionate motion of the head; "no easter wind dis time ob year. All fine-wedder sailing; beautiful smooth sea, allee same as dis."

"Now, see here," said I, with a note of imperativeness in my speech. "I have a right to express an opinion on this matter, and my contention is that it is ridiculous to sail round to Mossel Bay when you may get ashore for your walk to Cape Town on this side of the stormy headland of Agulhas."

The fellow's eyes sparkled with irritation and misgiving as he looked at me.

"Abraham and his mate are both of my way of thinking," I went on. "The lady, on the other hand, has no objection to Mossel Bay. Here we are then, undecided as yet. Do you follow me?" He nodded his head sideways, as much as to say, "Go on!" "The four of us, however, will agree to this. The chart gives you a view of South Africa. Let all hands assemble, saving those two men aft there, who are willing to

abide by your decision. Let me show them this chart and explain my ideas to them. If after I have been heard you and your men still insist upon our carrying this vessel to Mossel Bay, it shall be done."

"Where can we lay the chart?" said Helga.

"Is there a table in your forecastle, Nakier?" I asked, sending a look at the little hatch which yawned close by.

"Yaas, sah," he answered, glancing from Helga to the cuddy as if he could not understand us.

I met his eyes with a shake of my head as though I could read his thoughts, and, approaching him by a stride, whispered:

"Not in the cuddy. You know why, Nakier. She will not enter it until it has been cleansed, and I must have her by my side if we are to fairly argue this difficulty."

"I can easily descend," said Helga, stepping to the forecastle hatch to look down it. "I should like to see the men's quarters, Nakier. I am as much a sailor as any of you, and have slept in a hammock."

The man's gaze glowed with the admiration I had noticed in it while she was working out the navigation problems. Had he been the subtlest-witted of his race, what could he have witnessed in this desire of the girl and me to enter the forecastle to excite his suspicion? The other poor dusky fools standing by with tawny orange or primrose faces wrinkled their repellent masks with sailor-like grins of expectation; for whatever be the color of Jack's skin at sea, the least excitement, the least divergement from the miserable monotony of his life, is a delight to him.

"Shall I go first?" said I.

Helga uttered a clear laugh. "I should be ashamed," she answered, "not to be able to enter a ship's forecastle without help;" and so saying she put her little foot upon the first of the pieces of wood nailed against the bulkhead and serving as steps, and descended. I followed, bidding Nakier as I entered the hatch to order every mother's son of his crew to attend, since it was a question for all hands, and their decision was to be final.

It was a time of emotions and sensations, and memory recalls but little more. I remember that one after another, in response to Nakier's call, the men who were on deck dropped below, till the forecastle seemed full of dusky, grotesquely attired shapes. The daylight streamed down through the oblong yawn of hatch. The flame of a slush-lamp charged the interior with an atmosphere of greasy smoke. Some bunks went on either hand, and a few hammocks dangled from the upper

deck. There was a square table fixed to the stout after-bulkhead that divided this compartment from the hold. The men seemed to be without other wearing apparel than that they stood up in. I saw no sea-chests, no bags: merely here and there a shoe, a cap, a sou'-wester, an oilskin smock dangling at a nail. The murmur of the water, broken by the stealthily sliding stem, penetrated the stillness with a subdued sound of hissing like the swift respiration of the men, who gathered about Helga and me as we stood at the table with the chart open before us. Hard by the table was a stove, the chimney of which, in a zigzag, pierced the deck, showing its head well out of the way close against the hollow under the topgallant forecastle where the windlass was. But for this chimney the stratagem we were about to attempt must have been rendered impossible by humanity.

Pressing my forefinger upon the chart, the curling corners of which were held down by Nakier on the one hand and Helga on the other, I fell to explaining my views, as I chose to call them, meanwhile looking round to observe that all hands of the Malays and Cingalese were present—for the creatures had a trick of coming and going like shadows. I bade them all listen, looking into one face after another, and I can see them now, shouldering one another and eagerly bending forward, a strange, gloomy huddle of discolored countenances flashful with eyes, and of various expressions. Some of them barely understood English, apart from the plain sea-going terms, and these frowned down upon the chart or at me in their effort to understand my meaning. Upon every man's left hip was strapped the inevitable sheath-knife of the sailor, accessible in a twist of the wrist, and my breath for a little while grew labored, while I cursed myself for not having acted upon the first motion of my mind after Nakier had laid the capful of naked blades at Helga's feet.

"See here, now!" I exclaimed, addressing the men generally: "judge of the time and leagues we might be able to save by making for St. Helena Bay, or say Saldanha Bay, instead of Mossel Bay. Here is Simon's Town, and in this bight, as you all of you know, lies several of her majesty's ships. Figure a cruiser requiring us to bring to, and sending a boat aboard us. What then?"

The few of the fellows who understood me breathed hard and looked at Nakier. One of them, with a Dutch accent, exclaimed:

"Boss, how far it be from Saldanha Bay to Cape Town?"

Nakier said something almost fiercely to him in his native

tongue. The man responded in a dialect that certainly, to my ear, did not resemble Nakier's; but this might have been owing to the swinish thickness of his utterance, and, having spoken, he thrust one of his mates aside, to get nearer to the table, and, putting his grimy thumb on the part of the chart where Simon's Bay was marked, he stared at Nakier, nodding with a vehemence that seemed a sort of fury in him—immediately afterward rounding upon the others, and gesticulating with his hand to his neck, clearly signifying a halter.

"No, no!" cried Nakier.

"How far?—how far, boss?" shouted the other, addressing me.

"I can not tell," said I, "without a pair of compasses. I forgot to bring those measuring instruments with me, Nakier. I will fetch them—I'll be back among you in a few minutes."

Helga, with a well-acted start and look of alarm, said:

"You must not leave me alone here, Hugh! Let me fetch the box!"

"Very good!" said I.

She lightly gained the deck, but even while she was making for the hatch I was covering her retreat by noisily talking and demonstratively pointing, so that every man's attention was fixed upon me.

I held the corner of the chart, which Helga had pinned down with her fingers, while I spoke; the chart was stiff and had not been often used, and when one let go it rolled itself up into a funnel. I perceived that my reference to the British ships of war at Simon's Bay had taken a hold upon the imagination of a few of the fellows, and while I seemed to wait for Helga I made the most of this by asking the men if they could tell me what vessels were on that station, if they knew how often and in what direction they cruised, and then I said:

"Suppose on our arrival at Mossel Bay we find an English frigate or corvette there? Men, have you thought of that? It is not because I am innocent of the blood of the captain and the mate who were assassinated last night that I wish to be boarded by a lieutenant and a dozen English sailors from a man-of-war on our arrival, wherever it may be, or on the high seas. Can I be sure of proving my innocence if I am charged with having had a hand in this crime?" I cried, looking defiantly at Nakier and raising my voice. "Would you come forward and say that you and your men were guilty, and that I and the lady and the two Englishmen were innocent? You know you would not!" I thundered, heavily striking the chart a thump with my clinched fist. "Why, then, do you want to

sail past this Simon's Bay? Is not this side of the coast safer, freer from the risks of falling in with a ship of war, and nearer by many miles to Cape Town than Mossel Bay?"

"How much near?—how much near, boss?" cried the man who had already asked this question.

"Here!" said I. "Hold down this corner of the chart, will you, while I call to Mr. Wise to bring me the box of instruments? Evidently Miss Nielsen can not find the things. Mr. Wise put the box away, and will know where it is."

I left the table and stood under the hatch a moment to address a word to Nakier in that wild mad spirit of defiance that will often in the timidest mock at peril in the most terrible instant of it.

"Make your men understand," I cried, "that if we fall in with a man-of-war, every soul of them stands to be hanged by the neck until he is dead!"

As I said these words I sprung, caught the coaming of the hatch, gained the deck with another bound, and the next instant the slide of the hatch was swept in a roar through its grooves by the powerful hands of the two Deal boatmen.

"Cotched!" cried Abraham, while I swung the iron bar to the staple and hooked the padlock into it.

CHAPTER XXV.

FIRE!

"WELL, and if this here ain't been a right down sort of proper cajolin' job tew! Strike me bald, Mr. Tregarthen, if the hexecution of this here trepanning ain't vurth a gold medal, let alone the planning of it!" shouted Jacob.

I rose from my knees with my hand upon my heart, breathing short. The reaction from the intense mental strain of the preceding twenty minutes ran a feeling of swooning through my brain, but the fresh air and sense of safety speedily rallied me. Helga stood at the wheel steering the bark. I flourished my arm to her, and she kissed her hand to me. Close against the securely covered hatch stood the two boatmen, and at either man's feet lay a heavy belaying-pin, which, as I knew by what had been preconcerted, had been gripped by their powerful fists ready for the first black head that might have followed me as I emerged.

"Never should ha' believed you could have compassed it!" exclaimed Abraham. "Never could ha' supposed that such artful chaps as them darkies was so easy to be took in! A

hay-wan piece o' acting, Mr. Tregarthen! No theayter shov that e'er I've heard of or sat at ever came up to it!"

All was silent below. I had thought, on the hatch being thrust to, that the imprisoned fellows would have fallen to beating and bawling. There was not a sound. Were they accepting their fate with the resignation of the Mussulman? The scantling of the hatch-cover that secured them was of unusual thickness. When opened, the foremost lid slid back on top of the other, and when closed, as it now was, it was held fast to the coaming by a strong iron-hinged bar fitting to a staple in which lay a padlock. The after lid was kept down by an iron batten, so that, once secured, the hatch-cover was in all respects as impenetrable from above or below as the deck itself. Nor were we under any apprehension that the immured men could find other means of escaping. The bulkhead of the forecastle was a massive wall of wood. There was, indeed, a little hatch right forward, by which the forepeak might be entered; but this forepeak was also stoutly bulkheaded, with the cargo in the hold coming hard against the division; and though the men should contrive to break through into the hold, the secured after hatches would still as effectually bar the deck to them as though every mother's son lay helplessly manacled in the bottom of the ship.

"Now," said I, "the poor wretches must not suppose we mean to starve them. Murderers though they be, Heaven knows one can't but pity them, seeing what the wrong was that drove them into crime. Hush, now, that I may catch their answer!"

I stepped over to the forecastle chimney, which, as I have already told you, pierced the planks close against the opening under the topgallant-deck. It stood as high as a man; my mouth was on a level with the orifice, and the zigzag funnel provided as excellent a speaking-tube as though designed for that and no other purpose.

"Below, there!" I cried through it, and thrice did I utter this summons before I received a response.

"What you wanchee?" floated up a reply—thin, reed-like, unreal, a tone not to be distinguished.

"I am hailing to let you know that we shall keep you liberally supplied with food and fresh water," I shouted. "Plenty of fresh air will blow down to you through this chimney. Take notice: You are securely imprisoned. There is no possibility of your escaping. At the same time if you make the least effort to release yourselves we will leave you to starve below and to perish miserably with thirst."

"What do you mean to do with us?" was the faint cry that followed my speech.

"That is our business," I roared back. "Keep you quiet, and you shall be well used!"

I waited for the voice to speak again, but all remained hushed, and I came away very well satisfied to know that Nakier, at all events, would understand my language and translate it to the others.

This plot had been so carefully prepared that we knew exactly what to do. Our first business was to shift the bark's helm and trim sail for the Canaries—the land that lay nearest to us—where, at Santa Cruz, we might count upon getting all the help we required. We briefly arranged that Jacob should keep watch at the hatch. At the first sound of disturbance below he was to call us. There was small need for such sentineling, yet our fears seemed to find it necessary, at the outset, at all events, for they were eleven to three, and we could not forget that, securely imprisoned as we knew them to be.

I went aft with Abraham. My brave little Helga, on my approach, let go the wheel, and extended her hands. My love for her, that had been held silent in my heart by the troubles, the worries, the anxieties, the perils which had been pressing heavily upon us for many days, now leaped in me, a full and abounding emotion, at the sight of her sweet, hopeful face, her brave smile, the tender congratulation in her eyes, her outstretched hands; and, taking her in my arms, held her to me, and kissed her once, and yet again. Abraham, grasping a spoke of the wheel, swung off from it, giving us, with 'longshore modesty, his back, as he gazed steadfastly over the stern. She struggled for a moment, and was then quiet, trying to hide her blushing face against my shoulder.

"It must have come to this, Helga," I whispered, "sooner or later; and what is soonest is always best, my love, in such matters. You are mine by right of the poor old 'Anine;' you are mine, Helga, by right of your father's commands to me."

I kissed her again, released her, and she went to the rail and overhung it for a few minutes, while I waited watching her.

"Now, dear heart," said I, "let us get the ship round, and you shall tell us what course to steer for Santa Cruz."

From this moment we were too busy for a long while to think of sentiment. The bark was under all plain sail, and we were but three men to get the yards braced round. The wind was a very light breeze, the sea smooth and delicately crisped, the sky a pure azure, unblurred anywhere by so much as a feather-tip of cloud. Helga, still wearing a rosy face, but with the

very spirit of happiness and hope radiant in her eyes—and no better sign of how it was with her heart could I have asked of her—fetched the chart, and, having determined the course, took the wheel from Abraham, and the three others of us went to work with the braces. We sprung about in red-hot haste, since none of us liked the notion of leaving the hatch unwatched for even a few minutes. But two pairs of hands only could not have dealt without tedious toil with those yards.

According to Captain Bunting's reckoning, we had been in the latitude of Madeira on Tuesday, the 31st of October, but, spite of our having been hove to during the fierce weather of Nov. the 1st and 2d, we had driven heavily to the southward, so that now on this afternoon of Friday, Nov. 3d, we computed our distance from the Canaries to be some hundred miles. I can but speak as my memory serves me, but these figures I believe fairly represent the distance. The light wind softly humming in our rigging out of the north-east would not suffer the bark to lie her course for the islands by a point or two, but this was a matter of little moment. We might surely count from one hour to another now on heaving some sort of sail into sight, and in expectation of this we took the English ensign out of the locker and bent it on to the peak halyards with the jack down ready for hoisting when the moment arrived. Not that we expected that any merchantman we might fall in with would greatly help us. It was hardly to be supposed that a ship-master would consent to receive a mutinous, murderous crew of eleven colored men into his vessel. The utmost we could hope from a ship homeward bound like ourselves was the loan of a couple of men to assist us in navigating the bark to Funchal.

Indeed, the sense of our necessity in this way grew very strong in me after we had come to a pause in our labor of bracing the yards up, and were standing near the forecastle hatch pale with heat and wet with perspiration, and panting heavily—I say I grew mighty sensible of the slenderness of our little crew of three men and a girl—who, to be sure, in her boy's clothes would have been the nimblest of us all aloft, but who could do no service in that way in her woman's dress—when I sent my gaze up at the quiet breasts of sail softly swelling one upon another, and rising spire-like, and thought of how it must be with us should heavy weather set in, such a gale as we might be able to show no more than a close-reefed topsail to, unless the whole fabric of masts and canvas was to go overboard.

I said to Abraham:

"Don't you think we could safely trust a couple of those poor devils below—Punmeamootty, for example, and that tawny fellow, Mow Lauree? We're terribly short-handed."

"Ay," he answered, "short-handed we are, as you say, sir; but trust e'er a one of 'em, arter the trick they've been sarved! Lord love 'ee! the first thing them two men 'ud do whensoever our backs should be tarned for a moment 'ud be to lift that hatch there. And then stand by!"

"'Soides," exclaimed Jacob, "this 'ere's to be a salwage job, and, as poor old Tommy 'ud ha' said, we don't want to make no more shares than the diwisions what's already represented."

I was not to have been influenced by Jacob's talk about shares; but Abraham's remark was to the point; it convinced me, and I dropped the subject, making up my mind to this—that, if the wind should freshen, there was nothing for it but to shorten sail as best we could, and leave what we could not deal with to blow away.

When our work of trimming yards was ended, I told Jacob to boil a quantity of salt beef for the fellows below, that they might have rations to last them several days. We found a breaker stowed away in the long-boat, and this we filled with fresh water from the scuttle-butt, ready to hand through the hatch. I was very earnest in this work. It was easily imagined that the interior in which the men lay imprisoned would be desperately hot, with no more air to get to them than such as sulkily sunk out of the listless breeze through the zigzag chimney, and with the planks of the deck above their heads like the top of an oven with the day-long pouring of the sun. And, miscreants as they were, villains as I have no doubt they would have ultimately proved themselves to us, I could not endure to think of them as athirst, and also tormented with fears that we intended to leave them to perish of that most horrible form of suffering.

Yet it would not do to make separate parcels of the provisions we intended for them. We must open the hatch at our peril while we lowered the food; and this was to be done once, and once only.

It was past five by the time that all was ready. Twice had we heard a sound of knocking in the hatchway; but I guessed that it signified a demand for water, and dared take no notice of it until we were prepared. The three of us—Helga being at the wheel—armed ourselves with a heavy iron belaying-pin apiece, and, stationing the boatmen at the hatch, I put my

face against the mouth of the funnel and hailed the men through it. I was instantly answered:

"Yaas, yaas, sah! Oh, in the name of Allah, water!"

It was such another thin, reed-like voice as had before sounded, yet not the same. This time it might have been Nakier who spoke.

"We are going to give you water and food now!" I shouted. "We will open the hatch; but only one man must show himself to receive the things. If more than one of you shows himself we will close the hatch instantly, and you will get no water. Do you understand me?"

"Yaas, yaas," responded the voice, sounding in my ear as though it were half a mile distant. "We swear by Allah only one man he show hisself."

"Let that man be Punmeamootty!" I bawled.

I then returned to the hatch. Jacob, putting the belaying-pin into his coat pocket, stood abaft ready to rush the lid of the hatch to at a cry from me, while Abraham, on the left, hung, with poised weapon, prepared for the first hint of a scramble up from below. I remember the look in his face: it was as though he were already fighting for his life. I slipped the padlock, withdrew the bar, and pushed the cover back some three or four inches. The glare on the deck blinded me when I peered down: the interior seemed as black as midnight to my eyes.

"Are you there, Punmeamootty?" I cried.

I heard a faint "Yaas," pronounced in a subdued, terrified tone.

"Come up till your hands show," cried I, for I feared that he might have his knife drawn and would stab me if I put my arms down.

His hands, with extended fingers, rose through the mere slice of opening like those of a drowning man above water, and then I could see the glimmer of his eys as he looked up.

"Are the rest of you well away?"

"Allee standing back! Allee standing back!" he exclaimed, piteously.

On this I pulled the hatch open a little wider, Abraham bending over it with the belaying-pin lifted; and, the interstice being now wide enough, I fell to work as quickly as possible to hand down the provisions. These consisted of three or four bags of ship's biscuit and a number of large pieces of boiled salt horse. But the water-cask, or breaker rather, gave me some trouble. What its capacity was I do not know. It was too heavy for me to deal with single-handed. I called Jacob,

and together we slung it in a couple of bights of rope, and, rolling it over the coaming, lowered away. It effectually blocked the hatch while it hung in it, and Punmeamootty had to back away to receive it.

This done, I threw down a few pannikins, not knowing but that they might be without a drinking-vessel in the forecastle, then closed the hatch, catching a loud cry from below as I did so; but I dared not pause to ask what it was, and a moment later the cover was securely bolted, with Jacob sitting upon it, leisurely pulling out his pipe, and Abraham and I walking aft.

Some time later than this, bringing the hour to about six o'clock, Helga and I were eating some supper—I give the black tea, the biscuit, and beef of this meal the name they carry at sea—one or the other of us holding the wheel that Abraham might obtain some sleep in the cabin, when the man Jacob, who was trudging a little space of the deck forward, suddenly called to me. I left the wheel in Helga's hand, and made my way to the boatman.

"Oi fear them chaps is a-suffocating below," said he; "they're a-knocking desperate hard against the hatch, and their voices has been a-pouring through that there chimney as though their langage wor smoke. Hark! and ye'll hear 'em."

The sound of beating was distinct. I went to the mouth of the funnel, and heard a noise of wailing.

"What is it?" I cried. "What is wrong with you below?"

"Oh, give us air, sah! give us air!" was the response. "Some men die; no man he live long downee here!"

God knows to whom that weak, sick voice belonged. It struck a horror into me.

"We must give them air, Jacob," I cried, "or they're all dead men. What is to be done?"

"There's nowt for it but to open the hatch," he answered.

"Yes," cried I; "we can lay bare a little space of the hatchway—enough to freely ventilate the forecastle. But how to contrive that they shall not slip the cover far enough back to enable them to get out?"

He thought a moment, then, with the promptitude that is part of the education of the seafaring life, he cried:

"I have it!"

Next moment he was speeding aft. I saw him spring into the starboard quarter-boat with an energy that proved his heart an honest and humane one, and in a trice he was coming forward holding a couple of boat stretchers—that is to say, pieces of wood which are placed in the bottom of a boat for the oarsman to strain his legs against.

"These'll fit, I allow," cried he, "and save half an hour of sawing and cutting and planing."

He placed them parallel upon the after-lid, and their foremost extremities suffered the lid which traveled to be opened to a width that gave plenty of scope for air, but through which it would have been impossible for the slenderest human figure to squeeze. Between us we bound these stretchers so that there was no possibility of their shifting, and I then tried the sliding cover, and found it as hard-set as though wholly closed and padlocked.

"How is it now with you?" I cried through this interstice.

The reply came in the form of a near chorus of murmurs, which gave me to know that all the poor wretches had drawn together under the hatch to breathe. I desired to be satisfied that there was air enough for them, and called again:

"How is it with you now, men?"

This time I could distinctly recognize the melodious voice of Nakier:

"It is allee right now. Oh! how sweet is dis breeving. Why you wanchee keep us here?"

He was proceeding, but I cut him short; the liberation of the wretched creatures was not to be entertained for an instant, and it could merely grieve my heart to the quick, without staggering my resolution, to listen to the protests and appeals of them as they stood directly under the hatch in that small, black, oppressive hole of a forecastle.

After this all remained quiet among them. I was happy to believe that they were free from suffering; but, though I knew the hatch to be as secure as though it were shut tight and the hinged bar bolted, yet it was impossible not to feel uneasy at the thought of its lying even a little way open. Of all the nights that Helga and I had as yet passed, this one of Friday, November the 3d, was the fullest of anxiety, the most horribly trying. The wind held very light; the darkness was richly burdened with stars, there was much fire in the sea too, and the moon, that was drawing on to her half, rode in brilliance over the dark world of waters which mirrored her light in a wedge of rippling silver that seemed to sink a hundred miles deep. We dared not leave the hatch unwatched a minute, and our little company of four we divided into watches, thus: one man to sentinel the Malays, two resting, the fourth at the wheel. But there was to be no rest for me, nor could Helga sleep, and for the greater space of the night we kept the deck together.

Yet there were times when anxiety would yield to a quiet,

pure emotion of happiness, when I had my little sweetheart's hand under my arm, and when by the clear light of the moon I gazed upon her face and thought of her as my own, as my first love, to be my wife presently, as I might hope—a gift of sweetness and of gentleness and of heroism, as it might well seem to me, from old Ocean herself. That she loved me fondly I did truly believe and, indeed, know. It might be that the memory of her father's words to me had directed, and now consecrated, her affection. She loved me, too, as one who had adventured his life to save hers, who had suffered grievously in that attempt—as one, moreover, whom bereavement, whom distress, privation, all that we had endured, in short, had rendered intimate to her heart as a friend, and, as it might be, now that her father was gone and she was a girl destitute of means, her only friend. All had happened since October the 21st: it was now the 3d of November. A little less than a fortnight had sufficed for the holding of this wild, adventurous, tragical, yet sweet passage of our lives. But how much may happen in fourteen days! Seeds sown in the spirit have time to shoot, to bud, and to blossom—ay, and often to wither—in a shorter compass of time. Was my dear mother living? Oh! I might hope that, seeing that if ever Captain Bunting's message about me had been delivered, she would before this be knowing that I was safe, or alive, at least. What would she think of Helga? What of me, coming back with a sweetheart, and eager for marriage?—coming back with a young girl of whom I could tell her no more than this: that she was brave and good and gentle; a heroic daughter; all that was lovely and fair in girlhood meeting in her Danish and English blood; with face, with speech, with manners whose simple eloquence of appeal could need no words from me.

The morning broke. All through the night there had been silence in the forecastle; but daylight showed how the extreme vigilance of those long hours had worked in my face, as I might tell by no other mirror than Helga's eyes, whose gaze was full of concern as we viewed each other by the spreading light of the dawn. There was the dim gleam of a ship's canvas right abreast of us to starboard, and that was all to be seen the whole horizon round.

After we had got breakfast, the three of us went forward and received the empty breaker from the fellows below, contriving on our removing the stretchers so to pose ourselves as to be ready to beat down the first of them if a rush should be attempted, and instantly close the hatch. The breaker came empty to our hands. We filled and lowered it as on the pre-

vious evening, then left the hatch a little open as before; and now, so far as the provisioning of the fellows was concerned, our work for the day was ended, seeing that they had beef and biscuit enough to last them for several days. They made no complaint as to the heat or want of air; but after we had lowered the little cask, and were fixing the stretchers, several of them shouted out to know what we meant to do with them, and I heard Nakier vowing that if we released them they would be honest, that they had sworn by the Koran and would go to hell if they deceived us; but we went on securing the hatch with deaf ears, and then Jacob and I went aft, leaving Abraham to watch.

The sun was hanging about two hours and a half high over the western sea-line that afternoon, when the light air that had been little more than a crawling wind all day freshened into a pleasant breeze with weight enough slightly to incline the broad-beamed bark. This pleasant warm blowing was a refreshment to every sense: it poured cool upon our heated faces; it raised a brook-like murmur, a sound as of some shallow fretting stream on either hand the vessel; and, above all, it soothed us with a sense and reality of motion, for the bark broke the smooth waters bravely, and the wake of her, polished and iridescent as oil, went away astern to the scope of two or three cables. A few wool-white clouds floated along the slowly darkening blue like puffs of steam from the funnel of a newly started locomotive; but they had not the look of the trade cloud, Helga said. She had taken sights at noon, had worked out the vessel's reckoning, and had made me see that it would not need very many hours of sailing to heave the high land of Teneriffe into sight over the bow, if only wind enough would hold to give the old bucket that floated under us headway.

I was holding the wheel at this hour I am speaking of, and Helga was abreast of me leaning against the rail, sending her soft blue glances round the sea as she talked. Abraham, with a pipe in his mouth, his arms folded, and his head depressed, was slowly marching up and down beside the forecastle hatch. Jacob lay sound asleep upon a locker in the cuddy within easy reach of a shout down the companion-way or through the skylight.

On a sudden my attention was taken from what Helga was saying, and I found myself staring at the main-mast, which was what is called at sea a "bright" mast—that is to say, unpainted, so that the slowly crimsoning sun found a reflection in it and the western splendor lay in a line of pinkish radiance upon the surface of the wood. This line, along with a portion

of the spar, to the height perhaps of eighteen or twenty feet, seemed to be slowly revolving, as though, in fact, it were part of a gigantic corkscrew, quietly turned from the depth of the hold. At first I believed it might be the heat of the atmosphere. Helga, observing that I stared, looked too, and instantly cried out:

"Hugh, the vessel is on fire!"

"Why, yes!" I exclaimed; "that bluish haze is smoke!"

I had scarcely pronounced these words when Abraham, with his face turned our way, came to a dead halt, peered, and then roared out:

"Mr. Tregarthen, there's smoke a-filtering up out of the main hatch!"

"Take this wheel!" said I to Helga; then, in a bound, I gained the skylight, into which I roared with all my lungs for Jacob to come on deck. As I ran forward I could see the smoke thinly rising in bluish wreaths and eddies round about the sides of the main hatch and from under the mast-coat at the foot of the main-mast.

"They're a-shouting like demons in the fok'sle, sir," cried Abraham, throwing his pipe overboard in his excitement.

"They have set fire to the ship!" I cried. "Does smoke rise from the fok'sle?"

"Yes! ye may see it now!—ye may see it now!" he bawled.

In the moment or two's pause that followed I heard the half-muffled shouts of the dark-skinned crew, with one or two clearer voices, as though a couple of the fellows had got their mouths close against the narrow opening in the hatch. I rushed forward from abreast of the main-mast, where I had come to a stand.

"What is wrong?" I cried. "Where is this smoke coming from?"

A voice answered—it was Nakier's—but his dark skin blended with the gloom out of which he spoke, and I could not see him.

"Some man hab taken de fork'sle lamp into de forepeak, and hab by haccident set fire to de cargo by putting de lamp troo a hole in de bulkhead. For your God's sake let we out, or we burn!"

"Is this a trick?" cried I to Abraham.

"Test it, sir!—test it by opening the main hatch!" he shouted.

Jacob had by this time joined us. In a few moments we had removed the battens and torn off the tarpaulin, but at the first rise of the after-hatch cover that we laid our hands upon

up belched a volume of smoke, with so much more following that each man of us started back to catch his breath. Now could be plainly heard a noise of shrieking forward.

"My God! men, what shall we do?" I cried, almost paralyzed by this sudden confrontment of the direst peril that can befall humanity at sea, but rendered in our case inexpressibly more horrible yet, to my mind, by the existence of the pent-up wretches whom I felt, even in that moment of stupefying consternation, we dared not liberate while we remained on board.

"What's to be done?" cried Jacob, whose wits seemed less abroad than Abraham's. "Ask yourself the question. The wessel's on fire, and we must leave her if we ain't to be burned."

"What! leave the Malays to perish?" I exclaimed.

"Let's smother this smoke down first, anyways," cried Abraham, and he and his mate put the hatch on.

"Helga," I shouted, "drop the wheel! Come to us here! The ship is on fire!"

She came running along the poop.

"See this!" cried Abraham, extending his arms, which trembled with the hurry and agitation of his mind; "if them fellows forrads are not to be burned—and oh! my Gord, listen to them a-singing out!—we must provision a quarter-boat and get away, and, afore casting off, one of us must pull them stretchers off that the men may get out. Who's to be that last man? I will!"

"No, ye can't swim, Abey! That must be moy job," shouted Jacob.

"I can lay hold of a buoy, an' jump overboard."

"It'll be moy job, I tell ye!" passionately cried Jacob.

"Oh, hark to those poor creatures!" exclaimed Helga.

"Quick!" cried I. "Abraham has told us what to do. Oh! there would be no need for this horrible haste but for those imprisoned men! Hear them! Hear them!"

It was a wild and dreadful chorus of lamentation, mingled with such wailings as might rise in the stillness following a scene of battle. The noise was scarcely human. It seemed to proceed from famished or wounded jackals and hyenas. But to liberate them—every man armed as he was with a sheath-knife deadly as a kreese in those dingy fists—every man infuriated—it was not to be dreamed of!

As swiftly as we could ply our legs and arms, we victualed the starboard quarter-boat. Provisions were to our hands; we threw them in plentifully—remains of cooked meat, biscuit,

cheese, and the like; we took from each boat the breaker that belonged to her, filled them both with water, and stowed them. The sail belonging to the boat lay snugged in a yellow waterproof cover along the mast; there were oars in her—all other furniture indeed that properly belonged to her—rowlocks, rudder, yoke; and the boatmen, old hands at such work as this, nimbly but carefully saw that the plug was in its place.

All the time that we worked there was rising out of the forecastle hatch the dreadful noise of lamentation, of cries, of entreaties. It was a sound to goad us into red-hot haste, and we labored as though we were eight instead of four.

"Now, Mr. Tregarthen," cried Abraham, "if we ain't to be pursued by them savages on our liberating of 'em, we must cut them there falls."

And he pointed to the tackles which suspended the other boat at the port davits.

"Do so!" said I.

He sprung on to the rail, and passed his knife through the ends of the falls. This effectually put an end to all chance of the fellows chasing us in that boat.

"There'll be plenty o' time for them to get the long-boat out," shouted Abraham, running across the deck to us. "They're seamen, and there's Nakier to tell 'em what to do."

"Rot 'em for firing the ship!" cried Jacob. "I don't believe she is on fire. They've made a smoke to scare us out of her!"

"Is everything ready?" I exclaimed.

"Hugh!" cried Helga, clasping her hands, "I have forgotten my little parcel—the picture and the Bible!"

She was about to fetch them.

"I can be quicker than you," I cried, and, rushing to the hatch, jumped down it, gained the cabin she had occupied in Captain Bunting's time, and snatched up the little parcel that lay in the bunk. There was no smoke down here. I sniffed shrewdly, but could catch not the least savor of burning. It is the fore part of the ship that is on fire, I thought. As I ran to regain the hatch, it somehow entered my mind to recollect that while looking for a lead-pencil in the chief mate's berth, on the previous day, I had found a small bag of sovereigns and shillings, the unhappy man's savings—all, perhaps, that he possessed in the world—the noble fruits of Heaven knows how many years of hard suffering and bitter labor! I was without a halfpenny in my pocket, and entered the cabin to take this money, which I might hope to be able to repay to some next of kin of the poor fellow, should I ever get to hear of such a

person, and which in any case would be more serviceable in my pocket than at the bottom of the sea, whither it was now tending. Having secured the money, which would be very useful to Helga and me, should we live to reach a port, I hastened on to the poop, heart-sickened by the dull noise of the ceaseless crying forward.

"Now," said I, "let us lower away in the name of mercy, if only to free those wretches, half of whom may be already suffocated."

Helga and I got into the boat, and Abraham and his mate smartly slackened away the tackles. In a few moments we were water-borne, with the blocks released—for there was little left for me to learn in those days of the handling and management of a boat—and myself standing in the bow, holding on by the end of the painter which I had passed through a mizzen-channel plate. Abraham came down hand over hand by one of the tackles, and dropped into the boat, instantly falling to work to step the mast and clear away the sail.

"Below there!" roared Jacob; "look out for these duds!" and down came first his boots, then his cap, then his coat, and then his waistcoat. "I'll jump overboard from this 'ere quarter!" he bawled. "Stand by to pick me up!"

The released helm had suffered the bark to come up into the wind, and she lay aback with a very slow leewardly trend. The breeze held the water briskly rippling, but the plain of the ocean was wonderfully smooth, with a faint, scarce noticeable swell lightly breathing in it.

"Mr. Tregarthen," exclaimed Abraham, "you'll pull a stouter oar than Miss Nielsen. Supposin' the lady stands by that there painter!"

"Right!" I exclaimed, and on the girl entering the bows Abraham and I seized an oar apiece in readiness for Jacob's leap.

We lay close alongside, so that nothing was visible save the length of the ship's black side and her overhanging yardarms, and the thick lines of her shrouds rising to the lower mastheads. It was a breathless time. I had no fear for Jacob; I guessed that the imprisoned wretches would be too dazed by the glaring sunshine and by the fresh air and by their deliverance from the stifling, smoke-thickened gloom of the forecastle to catch him even should they pursue him ere he jumped. Nevertheless, those moments of waiting, of expectation, of suspense, strung the nerves in one to the tension of fiddle-strings, and sensation was sharpened into a sort of anguish.

Not more than three minutes elapsed—yet it seemed an hour. Then in a hoarse roar right over our heads sounded a shout:

"Look out, now!"

"Let go!" shrieked Abraham.

Helga dropped the line that held the boat.

"Back a-starn, now!"

The fellow poled the boat off, while I put my whole strength into the oar I gripped. I caught a glimpse of Jacob poising and stooping with his arms outstretched and his finger-ends together; his body whizzed through the air, his arms and head striking the water as clean as a knife; then up rose his purple face at a distance of three boats' lengths. A thrust of the oar brought us alongside of him, and, while I grabbed him by the neck to help him inboard, Abraham was hoisting the sail, with Helga at the yoke-lines, quietly waiting for the sheet to be hauled aft.

"Bravely done, Jacob," cried I. "There's a bottle of brandy in the stern-sheets. Take a pull at it! The sun will speedily dry you."

"Where's the Malays?" exclaimed Abraham.

"Didn't stop to see," answered Jacob. "I chucked the stretchers off and sung down 'Ye can come up,' and then bolted."

"There's Nakier!" cried Helga.

"And there's Punmeamootty!" I called.

I was astounded by observing the figures of these two fellows quietly gazing at us from the forecastle. Almost immediately after they had appeared others joined them, and before our boat had fairly got way upon her I counted the whole eleven of them. They stood in a body with Nakier in the thick of them surveying us as coolly as though their ship were at anchor, and all were well, and we were objects of curiosity merely.

"Why, what's the matter with 'em?" cried Abraham. "Are they waiting for us to sing out to tell 'em what to do?"

He had scarcely spoken the words when a loud shout of laughter broke from the dingy little mob, accompanied by much ironical flourishing of hands, while Nakier, springing on to the rail, pulled his hat off and repeatedly bowed to us. We were too much astounded to do more than gape at them. A minute later Nakier sprung back again on to the forecastle and piped out some orders in his melodious voice, in which, assuredly, the most attentive ear could have detected nothing of the weakness that I had noticed in his cries to us through the half-closed hatch. Instantly the men distributed themselves,

one of them running to the wheel; and while we continued to gaze, mute with amazement, the foretopsail-yard was swung, the bark's head slowly fell off, the yards were then again braced up, and behold! the little vessel, with her head at about south, was softly breaking the waters, with the after yards swinging as they were squared by the braces to the north-east wind.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOME.

THERE was small need to go on staring and gaping for any length of time to discover that we were the victims of an out and away shrewder, cleverer, subtler stratagem than we had practiced upon those dark-skins. I could not perceive any smoke rising from the forecastle. The fellows had been much too clever to accept the risk of suffocation as a condition of their escape. Abraham had assured me that the bulkhead which divided the forepeak from the main hold was as strong as any timber wall could well be; but there was either some damage, some rent, some imperfection in the bulkhead, which provided access to the hold, or the crew, jobbing with Asiatic patience at the plank with their sharp knives, had penetrated it, having had all last night and all this day to do the work in.

A very little thing will make a very great deal of smoke. The burning of a small blanket might suffice to fill the hold of a much bigger ship than that bark with a smell of fire strong enough and rolls of vapor dense enough to fill the crew with consternation and drive them to the boats. While the fellows kept the hatch of the forepeak closed the smoke could hardly filter through into the forecastle. I can but conjecture how they managed; but the triumphant evidence of their cleverness lay clear to our gaze in the spectacle of the bark slowly drawing away into the morning blue of the south and west.

When the two boatmen saw how it was, I thought they would have jumped overboard in their passion. Abraham, as usual, flung his cap into the bottom of the boat and roared at the receding figure of the ship as though she were hard by, and the men aboard attentively listening to him. Jacob, soaking wet, his black hair plastered upon his brow, and his face as purple now with temper as it had before been when he rose half-strangled out of the water, chimed in, and together they shouted.

Then, turning upon me, Abraham bawled out that he would follow them.

"This here's a fast boat," he vociferated. "Here be oars to help her canvas. Think them colored scaramouches is a-going to rob me of my salwage? Is it to be all bad luck—fust the 'Airly Marn,' and now," cried he, wildly pointing at the bark, "a job that might ha' been worth three or four hundred pound a man! And to be tricked by such creatures! to be made to feel sorry by their howling and wailing! to watch 'em a-sailing away with what's properly moine and Jacob's, and your'n! Whoy, there's money enough for a fust-class marriage and the loife of a gentleman arterwards in a single share of the salwage that them beasts has robbed us of!"

And so he went on; and when he paused for breath Jacob fell a-shouting in a like strain.

Meanwhile Helga, at the helm with a composed face, was making the boat hug the wind, and the little fabric, bowed down by the spread of lug till the line of her gunwale was within a hand's-breadth of the water, was buzzing along at a speed that was fast dwindling the heap of square canvas astern into a toy-like space of white. At last Abraham and his mate fell silent; they seated themselves, looking with dogged faces over their folded arms at the diminishing bark.

For my part, long before the two honest fellows had made an end of their temper I had ceased to think of the Malays and the trick they had put up on us. Here we were now in a little open boat—three men and a girl—in the heart of a spacious field of sea, with nothing in sight, and no land nearer to us than the Great Canary, which lay many leagues distant, and for which the north-east wind would not suffer us to head on a direct course. Here was a situation heavy and significant enough to fill the mind, and leave no room for other thoughts. And yet I do not know that I was in the least degree apprehensive. The having the bark's forecastle filled with a crew of fellows whose first business would have been to slaughter us three men on their breaking out had weighed intolerably upon my spirits. It was a dreadful danger, a horrible obligation now passed, and my heart felt comparatively light, forlorn and perilous as our situation still was. Then, again, I found a sort of support in the experiences I had passed through on the raft and in the lugger. The mind is always sensible of a shock on leaving the secure high deck of a ship, and looking abroad upon the vast, pitiless breast of old ocean from the low elevation of a boat's side. I have heard of this sort of transition paralyzing the stoutest-hearted of a shipwrecked crew; for in no other situation does death seem to come nearer to one, floating close alongside, as it were, and chilling the hot-

est air of the tropics to the taste and quality of a frosty blast; and in no other situation does human helplessness find a like accentuation, so illimitable are the reaches of the materialized eternity upon which the tiny structure rests, the very stars by night looking wan and faintly glittering, as though the foundered gaze had rendered their familiar and noted distances measureless compared to their height from a ship's deck or from solid earth.

But, as I have it in my mind to say, our experiences in the raft and the open lugger were so recent that it was impossible to feel all this vastness and nearness of the deep and the unutterable solitude of our tiny speck of fabric in the midst of it, as though one came fresh from days of bulwarked heights and broad white decks to the situation. Helga surrendered the helm to Abraham, and the boat blew nimbly along over that summer stretch of sea; Abraham steering with a mortified face; Jacob leaning upon the weather gunwale with his chin upon his arms, sullenly gazing into vacancy; and Helga and I a little forward, talking in a low voice over the past. What new adventure was this we had entered upon? Should we come off with our lives after all? The tigress ocean had shown herself in many moods since I had found myself within reach of her claws. She was slumbering now. The dusky lid of night was closing upon the huge open trembling blue eye. Should we have escaped her before she aroused herself in wrath?

The sun was now low upon the horizon, and the sky was a flashing scarlet to the zenith, and of a violet dimness eastward, where a streak or two of delicate cloud caught the western glory and lay like some bits of chiseling in bronze in those tender depths.

"There ain't nothen in sight," said Jacob, resuming his seat after a long look round; "we shall have to go through the night."

"Well, I've been out in worse weather than this," exclaimed Abraham.

"Pity the breeze doesn't draw more north or south," said I. "The boat sails finely. A straight course for Teneriffe would soon be giving us a sight of the peak."

"Ye and the lady'll ha' seen enough, I allow, by this toime to make ye both want to get home," said Abraham. "Is there e'er a seafaring man who could tell of such a procession of smothering jobs all a-treading on each other's heels? Fust the loss of the 'Hayneen' (meaning the 'Anine'), then the raft, then the foundering of the 'Airly Marn,' then the feed-

ing of Mussulmen with pork, then the skipper—as was a proper gentleman, tew—a-falling in love and afterwards being murdered, then that there fire, and now this here boat—and all for what? Not a blooming penny to come out of the whole boiling!" And his temper giving way, down went his cap again, and he jumped to his feet with a thirsty look astern; but fortunately by this time the bark was out of sight, otherwise there is no doubt we should have been regaled with another half hour of 'longshore lamentation and invective.

The breeze held steady, and the boat swept through as though she were in tow of a steamer. The sun sunk, the western hectic perished, and over our heads was spread the high night of hovering silver with much meteoric dust sailing amid the luminaries, and in the south-east stood the moon, in whose light the fabric of the boat and her canvas looked as though formed of ivory. We had brough a bull's-eye lamp with us, and this we lighted that we might tell how to steer by a small compass which Abraham had taken from the captain's cabin. We made as fair a meal as our little stock of provisions would yield, sitting in the moonshine eating and talking, dwelling much upon the incidents of the day, especially on the subtlety of the Malays, with occasional speculation on what yet lay before us; and again and again one after another of us would rise to see if there was anything in sight in the pale hazy blending of the ocean rim with the sky, which the moon as it soared flooded with her light.

To recount the passage of those hours would be merely to retrace our steps in this narrative. It was a tedious course of dozing, of watching, of whispering. At times I would start with the conviction that it was a ship's light my eyes had fastened upon out in the silvery obscure, but never did it prove more than a star or some phosphorescent sparkling in the eye itself, as often happens in a gaze that is much strained and long vigilant.

It was some time before five o'clock in the morning that I was startled from what was more a trance of weariness than of restful slumber by a shout:

"Here's something coming at last!" cried the hoarse voice of Abraham.

The moon was gone, but the starlight made the dark very clear and fine, and no sooner had I directed my eyes astern than I spied a steamer's light. The triangle of red, green, and white seemed directly in our wake, and so light was the breeze and so still the surface of the ocean that the pulsing of the engines, with the respiratory splashing of the water from

the exhaust-pipe, penetrated the ear as distinctly as the tick of a watch held close.

"Flash the bull's-eye, Jacob," shouted Abraham, "or she'll be a-cutting of us down!"

The fellow sprung into the stern-sheets and flourished the light.

"Now sing out altogether, when I count three," cried Abraham again, "'Ship ahoy!' to make one word of it. Now then —wan, tew, three!" We united our voices in a hurricane yell of "Ship ahoy!"

"Again!"

Once more we delivered the shout, with such a note in it as could only come from lungs made tempestuous by fear and desire of preservation. Six or seven times did we thus hail that approaching lump of shadow, defined by its triangle of sparks, and in the intervals of our cries Jacob vehemently flourished the bull's-eye lamp.

Suddenly the green light disappeared.

"Ha! She sees us!" exclaimed Abraham.

The sound of pulsing ceased, and then with a swiftness due to the atmospheric illusion of the gloom, but that, nevertheless, seemed incredible in a vessell whose engines had stopped, the great mass of shadow came shaping and forming itself out within her own length of us into the aspect of a large brig-rigged steamer, dark as the tomb along the length of her hull, but with a stream of lamp-light touching her bridge, from which came a clear strong hail:

"Boat ahoy! What is wrong with you?"

"We're adrift, and want ye to pick us up!" roared Abraham. "Stand by to give us the end of a line!"

Within five minutes the boat, with sail down and mast unstepped, was alongside the motionless steamer, and ten minutes later she was veering astern and the four of us, with such few articles as we had to hand up, safe aboard, the engines champing, the bow-wave seething, and the commander of the vessel asking us for our story.

On the morning of Saturday the 18th of November, the brigged-rigged steamer "Mosquito," from the west coast of Africa for London, stopped her engines and came to a stand off the port of Falmouth, to put Helga and me ashore at that town by the aid of a little west-country smack which had been spoken and now lay alongside.

The English coast should have been abreast of us days earlier than this; but very shortly after the "Mosquito" had picked

us up something went wrong in her engine-room; our passage to Madeira was so slow as to be little more than a dull and tedious crawling over the waters; and we were delayed for some considerable time at Funchal while the chief engineer and his assistants got the engines into a condition to drive the great metal hull to her destination.

But now the two bold headlands of the fair coast of Falmouth—the tenderest, most gem-like bit of scenery, I do honestly believe, not that England only, but that this whole great world of rich and varied pictures has to show—lay plain in our eyes. Streaks of snow upon the heights shone like virgin silver in the crisp brilliant November sun of that wintery Channel morning, and betwixt the headlands the hills beyond showed in masses of a milk-white softness poised cloud-like in the keen blue distance, as though by watching you would see them soar.

I thanked the captain heartily for his kindness, and then, standing in the gangway with my sweetheart at my side, I asked for Abraham and Jacob that we might bid them farewell. The worthy fellows, endeared to me by the association of peril bravely met and happily passed, promptly arrived. I pulled out the money that I had taken from Mr. Jones's berth, and said: "Here are thirteen pounds and some shillings, Abraham, which belonged to that poor mate whom the Malays killed. Here is half the amount for you and Jacob; the other half will carry Miss Nielsen and me to Tintrenale. You need not scruple to take it. I will make inquiries if the poor creature had any relatives, and, if I can hear of them, the money will be repaid. And now you will both of you remember a promise I made to you aboard the 'Early Morn.' Let me have your addresses at Deal;" for they were proceeding to the Downs in the steamer.

They told me where they lived. I then extended my hand. "God bless you both!" I said. "I shall never forget you!" And indeed more than that I could not have said at the moment, for my throat tightened when I looked into their honest faces and thought how Helga and I owed our lives to them.

It was a hearty farewell among the four of us; much handshaking and God-blessing of one another, and when we had entered the smack and shoved off, the two poor fellows got upon the bulwark rail and cheered us again and again, with such contortions of form and violence of gesture that I feared to see them fall overboard. But the steamer was now in motion, and in a very little while the two figures were indistinguishable. I have never seen them since; yet, as I write these words and think of them, my heart is full; if they be living I earnestly hope

they are well and doing well; and if these lines meet their eye they will know that the heartiest of hearty welcomes awaits them whenever they shall find themselves near my little Cornish home.

The 18th was a Saturday, and I made up my mind to stay throughout Sunday at Falmouth, that I might have time to receive a line from Mr. Trembath, to whom my first business must be to send news of my safe return, that he might deliver it with all caution to my mother; for it was not to be foreseen how a sudden shock of joy might serve her. So we were no sooner ashore than I wrote to Mr. Trembath, and then Helga and I quitted the hotel to make some purchases, taking care to reserve enough money to pay our traveling expenses home.

Next morning we went to church, and, kneeling side by side, we offered up the thanks of our deeply grateful hearts for our preservation from the many dark and deadly perils we had encountered and for our restoration, sound in health and limb, to a land we had often talked of and had as often feared we should never again behold.

It was a quiet holiday with us afterward: a brief passage of hours whose happiness was alloyed only by anxiety to get news of my mother. Our love for each other was true and deep—how true and how deep I am better able to know now than I did then, before time had tested the metal of our hearts. I was proud of my Danish sweetheart, of her heroic nature, of her many endearing qualities of tenderness, goodness, simple piety, of her girlish gentleness of character, which, in the hour of trial and danger, could harden into the courage of the lioness without loss, as I knew, of the sweetness and the bloom of her maidenhood. I felt, too, she was mine in a sense novel indeed in the experience of love-making: I mean, by the right of having saved her life, of plucking her, as it were, out of the fury of the sea; for we were both very conscious that, but for my having been aboard the "Anine," she must have perished, incapable of leaving her dying father even had she been able with her girl's hands alone to save herself, as between us we had saved ourselves.

But not to dwell upon this, nor to recount our walks on that quiet November Sabbath day, our exquisite and impassioned enjoyment of the scenes and sights and aromas of this favored space of land after our many privations and after the sickening iteration of the ocean girdle, flawless for days and making our sight ache with gazing and with expectation: not to dwell upon this and much more that memory loves to recall—Monday morning's post brought me a letter from Mr. Trem-

bath. My mother was well—he had told her I was at Falmouth —I was to come to her without delay. It was a long letter, full of congratulations, of astonishment, but—my mother was well! She knew I was at Falmouth! All the rest was idle words to my happiness, full of news as the letter was, too. Helga laughed and cried and kissed me, and an hour later we were in a railway carriage on our way to Tintrenale.

On our arrival we immediately proceeded to the house of Mr. Trembath. We were on foot, and on our way from the railway station, as we turned the corner of the hilly road that led to the town, the whole view of the spacious bay opened upon our eyes. We instantly stopped, and I grasped Helga's hand while we stood looking. It was a keen bright blue morning, the air of a frosty, of an almost prismatic brilliance of purity owing to the shining ranges of snow upon the slopes and downs of the headlands of the cliffs. The Twins and the Deadlow Rock showed their black fangs with a recurrent flash of light as the sun smote them while wet from the lift of the swell that was rolling into the bay.

"Yonder is where the 'Anine' brought up. Oh! Helga, do you remember?"

She answered me by caressing my shoulder with her cheek.

White gulls were hovering off the pier. To the right was the life-boat house out of which we had launched on that dark and desperate night of October 21st. The weather-cock crowning the tall spire of St. Saviour's was glowing like gilt in the blue. Far off, at the foot of Hurricane Point, was the cloudy glimmer of boiling water, the seething of the Atlantic fold recoiling from the giant base. A smart little schooner lay half a mile out on a line with the pier, and, as she rolled, her copper glistened ruddily upon the dark-blue surface. Sounds of life arose from the town; the ringing of bells, the rattling of vehicles, the cries of the hawker.

"Come, my darling!" said I, and we proceeded.

I shall never forget the look of astonishment with which Mr. Trembath received us. We were shown into his study—his servant was a new hand and did not know me; she admitted us as a brace of parishioners, I dare say. "Great Heaven! it is Hugh Tregarthen!" he cried, starting out of his chair as though a red-hot iron had been applied to him. He wrung both my hands, overwhelming me with exclamations. I could not speak. He gave me no opportunity to introduce Helga. Indeed, he did not seem sensible of her presence.

"Alive, after all! A resurrection in good faith! What a night it was, d'ye remember? Ha! ha!" he cried, clinging

to my hands and staring, with the wildest earnestness of expression, into my face, while his eyes danced with congratulation and gratification. "We gave you up. You ought to be dead—not a doubt of it! No young fellow should return to life who has been mourned for as you were!" Thus he rattled on.

"But my mother—my mother, Mr. Trembath! How is my mother?"

"Well, well, perfectly well—looking out for you. Why are you not with her instead of with me? But to whom am I talking—to Hugh Tregarthen's ghost?"

Here his eyes went to Helga, and his face underwent a change.

"This young lady is a friend of yours?" and he gave her an odd sort of puzzling, inquisitive bow.

"If you will give me leave, Mr. Trembath. I have not yet had a chance. First let me introduce you to Miss Helga Nielsen, my betrothed—the young lady who before long will be Mrs. Hugh Tregarthen, so named by your friendly offices."

He peered at me to see if I was joking, then stepped up to her, extended his hand, and courteously greeted her. Sweet the dear heart looked as she stood with her hand in his, smiling and blushing, her blue eyes filled with emotion, that darkened them to the very complexion of tears, and that made them the prettier for the contrast of their expression with her smile.

"My dear mother being well," said I, "the delay of a quarter of an hour can signify nothing. Let us seat ourselves that I may briefly tell you my story and explain how it happens that Helga and I are here instead of going straight to my home."

He composed himself to listen, and I began. I gave him our adventures from the hour of my boarding the "Anine," and I observed that as I talked he incessantly glanced at Helga with looks of growing respect, satisfaction, and pleasure.

"Now," said I, when I had brought my narrative down to the time of our being picked up by the "Mosquito," never suffering his repeated exclamations of amazement, his frequent starts and questions, to throw me off the straight course of my recital, "my wish is to see my mother alone, and when I have had about an hour with her I want you to bring Helga to our home."

"I quite understand," he exclaimed: "a complication of surprises would certainly be undesirable. You will prepare the way. I shall know how to congratulate her. I shall be able to speak from my heart," said he, smiling at Helga.

"One question, Mr. Trembath. What of my poor life-boat's crew?"

"Three of them were drowned," he answered; "the rest came ashore alive in their belts. It was a very astonishing preservation. The gale shifted and blew in a hurricane off the land, as of course you remember; yet the drive of the seas stranded the survivors down upon the southern end of the esplanade. They were all washed in together—a most extraordinary occurrence, as though they had been secured by short lengths of line."

"And they are all well?"

"All. Poor Bobby Tucker and Lance Hudson were almost spent, almost gone; but there was a preventive man standing close by the spot to where the sea washed them; he rushed away for help; they were carried to their homes—and what a story they had to tell! The poor Danes who had jumped into the boat were drowned to a man."

Helga clasped her hands, and whispered some exclamation in Danish to herself.

I sat for another five minutes, and then rose with a significant look at the clock, that Mr. Trembath might remember my sweetheart was not to be absent from me for more than an hour. I then kissed her and left the house, and made my way to my mother's home.

It was but a short step, yet it took me a long while to reach the door. I believe I was stopped at least ten times. Tintrenale is a little place; the ripple of a bit of news dropped into that small pool swiftly spreads to the narrow boundaries of it, and, though Mr. Trembath had only heard from me on the preceding day, the whole town knew that I was alive, that I was at Falmouth, that I was on my way home. But for this I might have been stared at as a ghost, and have nimbly stepped past faces turned in dumb astonishment upon me. Now I had to shake hands; now I had to answer questions, breaking away with what grace I could.

When I reached my home there was no need to knock. My dear mother was at the window, and, to judge from the celerity with which the door flew open, she had stationed a servant in the hall ready to admit me at her first cry.

"Dear mother!"

"My darling child!"

She strained me to her heart in silence. My throat was swelled, and she could not speak for weeping. But tears of rejoicing are soon dried, and in a few minutes I was on the sofa at her side, our hands locked.

In the first hurry and joy of such a meeting as this much will be said that the memory can not carry. There was a score of questions to answer and put, none of which had any reference whatever to my strange experiences. She was looking somewhat thin and worn, as though fretting had grown into a habit which she could not easily shake off. Her snow-white hair, her dear old face, her dim eyes, in which lay a heart-light of holy, reverent exultation, the trembling fingers with which she caressed my hair—the homely little parlor, too, with the dance of the fire-play in the shady corners of the room, its twenty details of pictures, sideboard—I know not what else—all my life familiar to me, upon which, indeed, the eyes of my boyhood first opened—I found it as hard to believe that I was in my old home again at last, that my mother's voice was sounding in my ear—that it was her beloved hand which toyed with my hair—as at times I had found it hard to believe that I was at sea, floating helplessly aboard a tiny raft under the stars.

"Mother, did you receive the message that was written upon a board, and read by the people of the Cape steamer homeward bound?"

"Yes, four days ago, but only four days ago, Hugh! I believed I should never see you again, my child!"

"Well, thank God it is well with us both—ay, well with three of us," said I; "the third presently to be as precious in this little home, mother, as ever a one of us that has slept beneath its roof."

"What is this you are saying?" she exclaimed.

"Be composed and give me your ear and follow me in the adventures I am going to relate to you," said I, pulling out my watch and looking at it.

My words would readily account for her perceiving something in my mind of a significance quite outside that of my adventures; but the instincts of the mother went further than that; I seemed to catch a look in her as though she half guessed at what I must later on tell her. It was an expression of mingled alarm and remonstrance, almost as anticipative as though she had spoken. God knows why it was she should thus suggest that she had lighted upon what was still a secret to her, seeing, as one might suppose, that the very last notion which would occur to her was that I had found a sweetheart out upon the ocean in these few weeks of my absence from home. But there is a subtile quality in the blood of those closely related which will interpret to the instincts as though the eye had the power of exploring the recesses of the heart.

I began my story. As briefly as I might, for there was no longer an hour before me, I related my adventures step by step. I had only to pronounce the girl's name to witness the little movement of jealousy and suspicion hardening in the compressed lips and graver attention of the dear old soul. I had much to say of Helga. In truth, my story was nearly all about Helga: her devotion to her father, her marvelous spirit in the direst extremity, her pious resignation to the stroke that had made her an orphan. I put before my mother a picture of the raft, the starlit gloom of the night, the dying man with his wife's portrait in his hand. I told her of Helga's heroic struggle with her anguish of bereavement, her posture of prayer as I launched the corpse, her prayer again in the little forepeak of the lugger where the dim lantern faintly disclosed the picture of her mother, before which the sweet heart knelt. My love for her, my pride in her were in my face as I spoke; I felt the warm blood in my cheek, and emotion made my poor words eloquent.

Sometimes my mother would break out with an exclamation of wonder or admiration, sometimes she would give a sigh of sympathy; tears stood in her eyes while I was telling her of the poor Danish captain's death and of Helga kneeling in prayer in the little forepeak. When I had made an end, she gazed earnestly at me for some moments in silence, and then said:

"Hugh, where is she?"

"At Mr. Trembath's!"

"She is in Tintrenale?"

"At Mr. Trembath's, mother."

"Why did you not bring her here?"

"I wished to break the news."

"But she is your friend, Hugh. She was a good daughter, and she is a good girl. I must love her for that."

I kissed her. "You will love her when you see her. You will love her more and more as you know her better and better. She is to be my wife. Oh, mother, you will welcome her —you will take her to your heart, so friendless as she is and so poor; so tender too, so gentle, so affectionate?"

She sat musing awhile, playing with her fingers. That coloring of suspicion, of a mother's jealousy, which I have spoken of, had yielded to my tale. She was thinking earnestly, and with an expression of kindness.

"You are young to marry, Hugh."

"No, no, mother!"

"She is very young too. We are poor, dear; and she has nothing, you tell me."

"She is one of those girls, mother, who have nothing, yet have all."

She smiled, and stroked my hand, and then turned her head as though in a reverie, and fixed her eyes for a little space upon my father's picture.

"We know nothing of her parents," said she.

"She has her mother's portrait. It tells its own story. We know who and what her father was. But you shall question her, mother. I see her kneeling at your side telling you her little life history."

At this moment the house-door knocker was set chattering by a hand that I very well knew could belong to no other man than Mr. Trembath. I was too impatient to await the attendance of the servant, and rushing to the door brought Helga into the parlor. The clergyman followed, and as Helga stood in the door-way he peered over her shoulder at my mother. The dear girl was pale and nervous, yet sweet and fresh and fair beyond words did she look, and my heart leaped up in my breast to the instant thought that my mother could not see her without being won.

The pause was but for a moment; my mother rose and looked at the girl. It was a swift, penetrating gaze, that vanished in a fine, warm, cordial smile.

"Welcome to our little home, Helga!" said she, and stepping up to her she took her by the hands, kissed her on both cheeks, and drew her to the sofa.

"Well, good-bye for the present, Hugh," exclaimed Mr. Trembath.

"I will acccompany you," said I.

"No," cried my mother, "stay here, Hugh! This is your proper place," and she motioned for me to sit beside her.

Mr. Trembath, with a friendly nod, disappeared.

* * * * * * *

My story comes to an end as the worthy little clergyman closes the door upon the three of us. When I sat down to this work, I designed no more than the recital of the adventures of a month; and now I put down my pen very well satisfied that I leave you who have followed me in no doubt as to the issue of Helga's introduction to my mother, though it would go beyond my scheme to say more on that head. I found a sweetheart at sea, and made her my wife ashore, and a time came when my mother was as proud of her Danish daughter as I was of my Danish bride.

There had been much talk between Helga and me, when we were on the ocean, of our going to Kolding; but down to the present time we have not visited that place. Her friends there are few, and the journey a long one; yet we are constantly talking of making an excursion to Copenhagen, and the mere fancy, perhaps, gives us as much pleasure as the trip itself would. Through the friendly offices of the Danish vice-consul at Falmouth we were enabled to realize upon the poor few effects which Captain Nielsen had left behind him in his little house at Kolding, and we also obtained payment of the money for which he had insured his own venture in the freight that had foundered.

There were moments when I would think with regret of the "Light of the World." No doubt, could we have brought her to England or to a port, our share of the salvage would have made a little dowry for Helga, for, though I had not seen the vessel's papers, I might reasonably suppose the value of the cargo, added to that of the bark itself, amounted to several thousands of pounds, and, as there were but four to share, Helga's and my division would not have failed to yield us a good round sum.

And what was the end of that ship? I have heard the story: it found its way into the newspapers, but in brief, insufficient paragraphs only. The whole narrative of her adventures after we had been tricked out of her by her colored crew is one of the strangest romances of the sea that my experience has encountered, student as I am of maritime affairs. Some of these days I may hope to tell the story; but for the present you will consider that I have said enough.

THE END

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